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AN

INQUIRY

RESPECTING THE

SELF-DETERMINING POWER OF THE WILL;

OR

CONTINGENT VOLITION.

BY JEREMIAH DAY,
PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

"I think that the notion of liberty, consisting in a *contingent self-determination of the will*, as necessary to the morality of men's dispositions and actions, is almost inconceivably pernicious; and that the contrary truth is one of the most important truths of moral philosophy that ever was discussed, and most necessary to be known." *President Edwards.*

NEW HAVEN:
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960.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1838,
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AN INQUIRY, &c.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

Review of Cousin.

Review of Cousin—President Edwards on self-determination—Moral government of God—Testimony of scripture—Ambiguous phraseology—Figurative language—Acrimonious controversy.

Soon after the publication of Henry's translation of Cousin's Psychology, I undertook to write a review of the work, for the Christian Spectator. Before coming to the chapter which treats of the Freedom of the Will, in the latter part of the book, the review had already been extended so far, that there was not room left to do justice, at that time, to so difficult a subject. It was, therefore, passed without notice. I have since been apprehensive, that from this omission, an inference might perhaps be drawn, that I acquiesce in the opinions there presented by Cousin. Long continued ill health, and urgent official engagements, have prevented an earlier expression of my own views on the subject. In endeavoring to give it a fair ex-

amination, I have not thought it necessary to confine my observations to a review of Cousin. The self-determining power of the will is a subject which is intimately connected with many of the theological discussions of the present day. Yet there are reasons for believing that it is not, in all points of view, generally and clearly understood. President Edwards, in his treatise on the Will, has given a masterly exposition of the principal forms in which it is commonly presented. But for some reason or other, his view of *contingent* self-determination appears to have attracted less attention of late, than that particular mode of statement which he resolves into an *infinite series* of volitions. The doctrine of his opponents was this, that the free acts of the will are not determined to be as they are, by any influence from *without* the will itself. This was considered by him as involving the alternative, that every volition is determined either by a *preceding* volition, or by *nothing at all.* The latter is contingent self-determination. This appeared to him so obviously absurd, as not to call for a logical statement, expanded into the form of a regularly constructed demonstration. To the other branch of the alternative, he has done such ample justice, that the question concerning it may be considered as definitively settled. This may be one reason why the ad-

vocates of a self-determining power in the will, adhere so tenaciously to that form of the doctrine which implies contingence, as being the only ground left, on which they can hope to maintain their position.

The momentous interest which belongs to this subject, lies in its relation to the *moral government of God.* If nothing from without the will of the agent can have any influence in determining what his volitions shall be, then it must be beyond the power of even the Father of our spirits to give direction to the acts of the will, without interfering with the prerogative of accountable agency. Omnipotence itself cannot work contradictions. When that inexplicable power, the human will, has once been set a going, it must, according to the doctrine of some, be suffered to run on forever, throwing off its volitions by contingent efficiency, uncontrolled and uncontrollable, by any thing from without itself. If the Creator has filled this and other worlds with living agents, whose acts of will are entirely independent of himself; he can only look on, and observe the operation of their voluntary powers; accommodating the course of his external providence to what *they* may happen to determine. On this supposition, he can *punish* iniquity, but can do nothing to *prevent* it, without impairing the independence of moral agency. He can render

a *reward* to virtue, but can take no effectual measures to *promote* it, except by such a determining influence, as is supposed to be inconsistent with the very nature of virtue. He can rule the worlds of *matter*, which roll in harmony and brightness through the heavens, but can not control the heart of man. The rewards and punishments which he distributes to the subjects of his moral kingdom, can have no efficacy in favor of obedience. *Human* means also for the prevention of vice, and the promotion of holiness in others, must be entirely unavailing, if they can have no influence in determining the acts of the will. To what purpose are the restraints of education, the injunctions of parental authority, the admonitions of friendship, the sanctions of law, and the solemn ministrations of the house of God; if the purposes of the heart are wholly independent of them all; if contingence is the supreme law of voluntary agency.

On a subject so momentous, and so difficult to be thoroughly comprehended in all its relations, it might be expected, that we should almost instinctively turn to the records of inspired truth for instruction. He who gave to the human soul its being, and all its powers of thought and volition, must surely know, whether any efficacious influence from without, is inconsistent with accountable agency.

But here we are met with an assumption which precludes a reference to the decision of scripture. It is claimed, that reason, and consciousness, and common sense, have already decided the point; and that God can not contradict, in his word, what he has distinctly made known to us, by the faculties which he himself has implanted in the soul. Whatever passages, therefore, which *seem* to favor a particular doctrine, may be found in the scriptures; they are to be so interpreted, as not to signify any thing which reason pronounces to be absurd. We are called upon, then, to inquire, whether the position, that nothing but the will itself has any influence in determining what its acts shall be, *is so intuitively or demonstrably certain*, as to preclude all possibility of finding the contrary declared in the word of God. So long as this position is adhered to, it is in vain to think of appealing to the authority of the scriptures, on the question respecting a self-determining power of the will. They will, of course, be so explained, as to express a meaning in conformity with the principles assumed. This is my apology for making an application of dry metaphysics to a subject so nearly connected with one of the most important departments of scriptural theology. Those who are prepared to receive implicitly the divine tes-

timony, just as they find it on the sacred page, may pass over this part of the subject, as being unnecessary for them; and proceed to the section in which the evidence from scripture is presented. I do not propose to establish certain theological points, by metaphysical reasoning, and then call in the aid of revelation, merely to *confirm* the results of philosophical discussion. I would only aim at removing some of the objections which may lie in the way of a ready admission of the testimony of scripture, on the subject under consideration.

In attempting to express my views, on a point of some difficulty, it has been a question with me, what chance I have of making myself well understood. I have no expectation of being able to write in such a manner, as to avoid all danger of being misapprehended; especially if quotations should be made of single sentences or short paragraphs, cut out from the passages which explain and qualify their meaning. A composition must be insufferably tedious, which is so elaborately wrought, that each sentence can be as clearly and fully understood, when taken by itself, as when read in connection with what precedes and what follows. An intricate subject can not be thoroughly discussed, in a way to be comprehended at once, by hasty and *superficial* readers.

Ambiguous phraseology.

The main source of the misapprehensions which are so common, in metaphysical investigations, is the great *ambiguity* of the language of mental philosophy. It forms a striking contrast to the uniform distinctness of the terms in mathematical science. The value of a discussion upon any point connected with the freedom of the will, must depend, in a great measure, upon the skill with which the writer disengages the subject from the ambiguities of language which meet him at every turn. This is not to be done, by avoiding the *use* of such terms as have various meanings. For he will find no others belonging to this department of knowledge. The art of rightly using ambiguous terms, consists in so introducing and placing them, that, with suitable definitions and explanations when necessary, the connection will show which of their several meanings is to be given them at the time. The writer need not go upon the supposition, as is too often the case, that a word which he uses has only *one* proper signification. He may even be allowed to use it in different senses himself, if he will enable the reader to distinguish the various meanings given to it in different places. And while he makes his own selection among the authorized significations of a term; he ought readily to concede to others the priv-

ilege of making a different choice, upon the condition of rendering the meaning distinct to the reader. A large portion of the agitating controversies which bring such reproach upon the Christian church, at the present day, would be put at rest, if each contending party would no longer insist that others should not only agree with them in opinion, but should express their belief in the same words. Doctrinal differences among Christians are often greatly magnified, by the diversity in the phraseology to which the opposing parties are severally accustomed. They frequently agree in their opinions, while they differ in the language which they use to express them. Jealousy, and alienation, and division may be removed, by explaining the ambiguity of theological terms. On the other hand, there may be important differences of opinion, among those who agree in the use of the same form of words. A man who is deviating from scriptural truth, may avail himself of long established and approved phraseology, for the purpose of concealing erroneous views, which, if prematurely disclosed, might excite suspicion and alarm. There is a wide difference between using ambiguous language *from necessity*, and using it *of choice*. In the one case, the writer endeavors to guard, as much as possible, against misapprehension. In the

Ambiguous phraseology. Figurative language.

other, to render the meaning dubious, is the very purpose for which the ambiguous terms are chosen. Even those who are sound in their doctrinal views, may unintentionally propagate error, by an unguarded use of expressions, which may convey, to many minds, a meaning very different from what was intended. I am far from supposing, that *all* the differences of opinion among professing Christians are merely verbal. There is surely an immeasurable distance between a system of doctrines which considers the volitions of creatures as all fortuitous, and one which views them as under the direction of the divine will.

One very fruitful source of the misapprehensions which are so frequent in metaphysical investigations, is the use of *figurative* language. To avoid this wholly, is almost impossible. It is true, that metaphorical expressions *may* be without ambiguity. But the figures in mental philosophy, are almost exclusively drawn from *material* objects; and the properties and laws of the mind, differ so widely from those of matter, that the analogies which are drawn between them, are often calculated to mislead. Even the most cautious metaphysician will find it difficult to avoid altogether this source of error; for the most familiar and well established terms in mental science, have been bor-

rowed from language originally appropriated to material phenomena.

But the liabilities to uncertainty of meaning are greatly multiplied, by the ardor of theological controversy. The language of excited feeling is almost always figurative. And in the glow of party contention, a man does not always stop to consider, whether the figures which he uses have all the precision that is requisite to secure them from misinterpretation. He regards more the keen edge of his weapons, than the unerring aim with which they might be directed. "Logic set on fire," is better fitted to make a popular application of principles already established, than to disengage an intricate subject from the mazes by which the truth is concealed;—to bring it forth into clear and open day. Language the most suitable for the latter purpose is simple and unadorned.

But how can one expect to gain a hearing on a subject uninviting in itself, if he does not throw around it the attractions of imagery, and the refinements of elegant composition? To what purpose does he anxiously guard himself against being misunderstood, when he is in greater danger of not being read? In this day of clamor, and strife, and hot contention, how can a man hope to be noticed at all, if he does

not take a hostile position, and brandish the fiery tempered weapons of a combatant? Who, now a days, cares to read a book which has in it none of the envenomed shafts of controversy? Who subscribes for even a *religious* periodical, if he finds it free from the bitterness of party animosity? Notwithstanding these discouraging considerations, I shall endeavor to avoid the acrimony and personalities of theological controversy; and shall incur the hazard of attempting to make myself understood, though it may be with a sacrifice of some of the ornaments of style.

The subject of our inquiry has important relations to almost every part of doctrinal and practical theology. But in attempting to examine a single point, I have not thought it necessary to write a whole system of divinity. Though it will be requisite to refer, occasionally, to several kindred subjects, for the purpose of illustration, and to obviate objections; yet it is desirable to avoid rendering the investigation needlessly complicated, by the introduction of superfluous matter.

SECTION I.

POWERS OF THE MIND.

Cause and effect.

Cause and effect—Dependence—*Efficacy* of a cause—Complex cause—*Efficient* causes—Physical and Moral causes—Negative causes—*Every* change has a cause—Contingence—Dependent contingence—Absolute contingence—Power—Mental powers—Classification of Mental powers—The will—Volition—Emotions.

THE point proposed for our examination is the self-determining *power* of the will. But here we are met, at the threshhold, by a very ambiguous term. What is power? Before we proceed, it will be necessary to stop and inquire what it means. In all the significations of the term, it probably has relation to a *cause*. The meaning of one of the words is explained, by referring to the other. What, then, is a cause?

A CAUSE, in the more *extended* signification of the term, is an ANTECEDENT *on which something* DEPENDS.

AN EFFECT is a CONSEQUENT *of something upon which it* DEPENDS.

Cause and effect. Dependence.

Between a cause and its effect, there is always the relation of antecedent and consequent. But antecedence is not the *only* element, in the notion of a cause. There must also be *dependence*. The darkness of the night precedes the light of the day. But the darkness is not the *cause* of the light. The one does not *depend* on the other. Every change in the universe, at any one moment of time, is the immediate antecedent of every change which takes place in the succeeding moment. But every one of the former changes, is not the cause of every one of the latter.

One thing *depends* on another, when the one exists on account of the other, and when, without the other or something equivalent, it would *not* exist. This implies, that there is that, in the nature and relations of the antecedent, which *secures* the existence of the consequent. It is what is called *efficacy*, in reference to the cause; and *dependence*, in reference to the effect. An *event, or change, or action*, depends on a particular antecedent or antecedents, when it takes place on account of such antecedents, but would not take place without them. One thing depends on another for the *mode* of its existence, when any difference in the antecedent makes a difference in the

consequent. Thus the waves of the sea vary, according to the changes in the force of the wind. The *ground* of dependence may be very different, in different cases. The quantity of surface on a globe, depends on the length of the diameter. Any change in the diameter would make a difference in the surface. The ground of dependence, here, is the geometrical relation of the parts of the globe. The velocity of a given body, moving without resistance, depends on the force with which it has been impelled. Any change in the impelling force would make a change in the velocity. This is dependence of *an effect upon its cause.* A mathematical theorem depends on the definitions and axioms by which it is demonstrated. This is a logical dependence of *a conclusion upon premises.* In all these cases, the dependence is certain, though the *grounds* of it may be very different. One thing depends upon *several* others taken together, when it is the consequence of these, but without the united influence of them all, it would not be what it is. One thing depends *in part* on another, when this is *one* of two or more antecedents, upon which, taken collectively, the consequent depends. The tides of the ocean depend partly on the position of the moon, and partly on the

place of the sun in the heavens. One event is *in*dependent of another, when the one neither promotes or hinders the taking place of the other.

A cause is that which not only is followed by its effect, but which *renders* the effect certain. It is not only an antecedent, but an *efficacious* antecedent. President Edwards says, "I sometimes use the word cause, in this Inquiry, to signify *any antecedent*, either natural or moral, positive or negative, on which an event, either a thing, or the manner or circumstance of a thing, *so depends*, that it is the ground and reason, either in whole or in part, why it is rather than not; or why it is as it is, rather than otherwise."* "*Dependence* on the influence of a cause is the *very notion* of an effect."†

Even Dr. Thomas Brown, who has written largely on this subject, though he asserts, that the only essential circumstance of causation is invariableness of antecedence and consequence; yet uses language which implies, that in this expression, he includes what is commonly meant by dependence, efficacy, influence, &c. He employs the very terms *efficacy* and *efficiency*, as synonymous with power. He says, that

* Edwards on the Will: Part II. Sec. 3. † Ibid. Part II. Sec. 8.

"to be that which *can not* exist, without being instantly followed by a certain event, is to be the *cause* of the event, as a correlative term." He evidently does not intend to *exclude* dependence, efficacy, &c. from our notion of causation; but seems to suppose, that they are, of course, *implied* in "a sequence so invariable, that it forever has been, forever will be, and forever *must* be." The two elements of dependence and invariable antecedence, he appears to blend into one. If they are distinct, as, by most minds, they will probably be thought to be; both are certainly to be included in our notion of causation.*

An effect may, in many cases, be produced, not by any *single* antecedent; but by the *combined influence* of several. All the circumstances upon which the effect depends may be considered as a *complex* cause. If any one of the antecedents be wanting, the effect may fail. If either the soil upon which grain is sown, or the rain, or the sunshine be deficient, an abundant harvest will not be gathered. The influence of the several parts of a complex cause may be very various. In the formation of the rainbow, the sun has an agency widely different from that of

* Brown's Cause and Effect; third Edinburgh edition, p. 39, 108, 113, 114, 120, 124, 135, 136, 466, 468, 482.

the cloud. If external *motives* are, in any proper sense the cause of a man's volitions; they are so, in a very different way from that in which the *agent himself* is the cause of them. Motives do not resolve and choose; though they may have an important influence, in determining a man how to choose. The motives and the agent are both causes, in this sense, that they are antecedents on which the volitions depend. In the case of a complex cause, some one of the principal antecedents may be spoken of as *the* cause; though the effect is not supposed to follow from that alone, without the concurrence of others.

Some writers speak of *efficient* causes, as being a distinct class. But all real causes are so far efficient, or efficacious, that they are antecedents on which, in part at least, effects depend. That on which nothing depends is no cause. Dugald Stewart makes a distinction between *efficient* and *physical* causes; meaning by the former *real* causes, and by the latter, those phenomena in the material world which *appear* to be causes; though it is possible, that they are not truly so. Others appear to intend by an efficient cause, an *immediate* antecedent, in distinction from one which is remote, and which produces effects by the intervention of other causes. Some consider an efficient

cause to be that which gives existence to a *substance*, either matter or mind; or which produces some change in the nature of a substance. Others apply the term to an *agent*, to one who gives existence to volitions. Some distinguish between physical and *moral* causes. But they do not always give us to understand whether, by a moral cause, they mean a cause of moral *effects*, or a cause which is *itself moral;* that is, which is either holiness or sin. The cause of *all* sin can not be a moral cause, in the sense of being itself sin. By some, the term physical appears to be applied to those causes, between which and their effects, the connection is admitted to be *certain;* while they consider the connection between moral causes and their effects as being only probable. These and other distinctions upon this subject, it is not necessary to dwell upon at present.

President Edwards speaks of a *negative* cause. But absolute nothing can only be the cause of a negative effect, that is of nothing. It is very true, that the discontinuance of a positive agency may result in a discontinuance of its appropriate effects. It may leave the subject to the influence of other causes. In the example which Edwards gives, the presence of the sun is the cause of the fluidity of the waters.

Negative causes. Every change has a cause.

The withdrawing of his beams, in the winter, is followed by the freezing of the waters; because they are then left to the uncontrolled agency of the positive causes of congelation.

The axiom, that every change implies an adequate cause, is a primary element of human thought. It has all the characteristics of a fundamental truth. It is *intuitive*, requiring no course of reasoning to prove it. It is *irresistible;* no power of argument can overthrow it. It is *universal;* compelling the belief of all classes, in all ages of the world. A few skeptical philosophers have *professed* to call it in question. But they have plainly shewn, by their writings and their conduct, that they were as truly under its influence as others.

We sometimes hear it stated, very incorrectly, that every thing which *exists* requires a cause of its being. This is a proposition widely different from the axiom, which has now been mentioned. That which has existed *from eternity* does not surely require an antecedent. But that which *begins* to exist, or which is subject to any change in the *mode* of its existence, requires a cause of that change; some antecedent, on which it depends for being what it is. It is not sufficient to say, that there is no *effect* without a

cause. This may be admitted by those who affirm, that there may be *changes* which are not effects, and which therefore have no cause.

CONTINGENCE.

However preposterous is the position, that any change can take place without a cause, yet for argument's sake, there is sometimes occasion to make the supposition; and to look for some convenient word or phrase to express it. As the absolute negation of a cause, in any case, is not a doctrine of common sense; the language of common life does not supply us with terms which, according to customary usage, have this signification. The term *contingence*, is sometimes employed for this purpose. But when this is done, it ought to be with the distinct understanding, that the denial of causation and dependence, is not the *only* meaning which the word is used to express. Some writers speak of all created existences as being contingent, in distinction from the necessary existence of the Creator. The former are said to be contingent, because God might, at his pleasure, have made them different, or not made them at all. In this sense, contingence, is so far from being opposed to causation, that dependence on the will of the Creator,

Dependent contingence. Absolute contingence.

is the very relation which the word is employed to express.

But in popular use, it is most commonly applied to cases in which something takes place, the immediate cause of which is *unknown* or *unobserved*. Yet even in this application of the term contingence, there is no intention of denying the dependence of events upon *some* cause. Thus the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, in their Confession of Faith, speak of the "contingency of second causes;" and to illustrate their meaning, adduce the proof text, "The lot is cast into the lap, *but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.*"

But philosophers frequently use the term contingence to signify, that some change takes place, which is absolutely *without any cause;* which has no dependence on any thing preceding. There is occasion to use it in this sense, when examining the various theories respecting acts of the will. In the present inquiry, it will commonly be used to signify the exclusion of causation or dependence, in the case of volition; the denial that there is any thing preceding which determines the act of the will to be what it is. According to this signification, the *opposite* of contingence is dependence. So far as any thing is contin-

gent, in this absolute sense; so far it is dependent on nothing; and so far as it is dependent, it is not contingent. The very definition of this kind of contingence, renders it wholly incompatible with dependence. There can be no medium between the two conditions, unless it be, that a thing may be *partly* pendent and partly contingent. If human volitions are dependent on nothing preceding, for being what they are, then they come to pass by perfect accident.

It is very important, that the difference between the popular and the philosophical meaning of contingence, should be kept clearly in view, in the discussions concerning the attributes and prerogatives of the will. President Edwards was careful to mark this distinction. "As the words necessary, impossible, unable, &c. are used by polemic writers in a sense diverse from their common signification, the like has happened to the term *contingent*. Any thing is said to be contingent, or to come to pass by chance or accident, in the original meaning of such words, when its connection with its causes or antecedents, according to the established course of things, *is not discerned;* and so is what we have no means of foresight of. And especially is any thing said to be contingent or accidental with regard to us, when

any thing comes to pass that we are concerned in, as occasions or subjects, without our foreknowledge, and beside our design and scope. But the word contingent is abundantly used in a very different sense; not for that whose connection with the series of things we can not discern, so as to foresee the event; but for something which has absolutely no previous ground or reason, with which its existence has any fixed and certain connection."* A similar distinction is applicable to the corresponding terms accident, chance, fortuitous, &c.

POWER.

A cause always implies an effect. By observing the *relation* between these, we have the idea of *power*. The efficacy of the cause, its being of such a nature as to produce effects, is its power. In other words, *power is that, belonging to a cause, upon which the effects depend.* Though the term is primarily used to express the *relation* between the cause and its effects, yet it is frequently applied in such a way, as to appear to stand for the cause itself, or some part of the cause. The power of a substance to pro-

* Freedom of the Will: Part I. Sec. 3.

duce certain effects, may depend upon a *portion* only of the substance, or upon some one of its qualities. The magnetic power of the loadstone is owing to the particles of *iron* which it contains. This may be spoken of, as constituting the attractive power of the stone. Frequently also, power is considered as something *intervening* between the cause and the effect; a connecting link which is supposed to give efficacy to the cause. The harpsichord produces impressions on the ear, by means of vibrations in the air. The power of the instrument to affect the ear, depends upon these vibrations. But in this case, there are, properly speaking, *two* causes, one immediate, the other remote. The motion in the air is the *effect* of the motion in the instrument, and the *cause* of the impression on the ear. Between an effect and its *immediate* cause, we know of nothing intervening.

Power is sometimes ascribed to *effects*, as well as to causes. The liability of a thing to be influenced by a cause, is called *passive power*, or more properly, susceptibility; while the efficacy of the cause is called active power. Heat has the power of melting ice; and, in the language of some, ice has the power of being melted.

In the *most extensive* use of the term, the power to do any thing, includes *all* the antecedents, the whole aggregate of circumstances, upon which the effect depends. These, in many cases, may be very numerous. Yet the effect may fail, from the absence of any one of them. In this comprehensive, though rather unusual sense of the word, a man has not power to do any thing which he does not actually do. For if *all* the antecedents upon which the effect depends are united in the cause, the effect must certainly follow. If it fails, its failure must be owing to the fact, that some one, at least, of the elements in the complex cause is wanting. We rarely have occasion, however, to speak of power in this absolute sense. When a thing is done, there is no need of inquiring, whether there was power to do it. We more commonly ascribe power to a cause, when it possesses all the requisites for producing a particular effect, *except something which may be easily added.* We say that gunpowder has the power of exploding; meaning that it has this power when touched by a spark of fire. The fire is the additional element, which must form a part of the complex cause, before the effect will be produced. In speaking of *human* agency, we are accustomed to say, that a man has

power to do any thing, which he does *whenever he will.* The willing mind is all that is wanting to complete the list of antecedents on which the effect depends. When this is added, the thing will be done. The common phraseology relating to such cases is; "The man can do the thing, *if he will;*" that is, he has all the requisite power, except a willing mind; and when that is added, the effect will take place: he has already that which is most commonly called power; and when there is added the consenting will, he will have *full* power;—power in the broadest sense of the term, including every antecedent on which the effect depends. This was evidently the meaning of the leper, when he came to Christ with the cry; "Lord, *if thou wilt,* thou *canst* make me clean."

MENTAL POWERS.

The powers of the *mind* are known, by what the mind *does.* Our own mental acts, our thoughts, our emotions, our purposes, are the objects of our consciousness. But every act implies an adequate cause. Whatever the mind does, it must have power to do. It is sometimes said, that we are *conscious* of our own mental powers. But according to the definitions of

modern philosophers, the direct *objects* of consciousness are the *operations* of the mind; not its substance, or its faculties. Still it must be true, that our own existence is *implied*, in every act of consciousness. A man is conscious not only that he has thoughts; but that they are *his own* thoughts, and not another man's. Every mental operation of which we are conscious, implies not only our own existence, but a mental *power* adequate to the effect. But at any one time, a man is not conscious of powers which are not then in exercise. He can not have an intuitive view of the substance of his mind, when it is wholly inactive; or of any *faculty* of the mind; when it is not in operation: though he may know, from what was implied in *previous* consciousness, that he possesses powers which are not now called into exercise.

The *classification* of our intellectual and moral powers, is a subject of importance; yet not easily settled, if we may judge from the clashing representations of different philosophers. One principal difficulty arises from the fact, that each considers his own method as the *only one* which is admissible. Now the truth is, that there is no one scheme of classifying the powers of the mind which is *essential*, to the exclusion of all others. Classification is a matter of

convenient arrangement; and may be varied, according to the purposes to which, in different cases, it is to be applied. The practical farmer has no occasion to classify his cattle, his grasses, and his grains, according to principles laid down in works on natural history. The architect does not find it necessary to arrange the materials of his masonry, according to mineralogical and geological distinctions. No particular mode of classification, is rendered necessary, by the laws of nature. It is true indeed, that in all attempts at classifying, the nature of things is to be regarded, so far as this, that all correct arrangement in classes, must be founded on *resemblance*. In the same class, are to be put those objects only, between which there is some real or supposed resemblance. Things are to be arranged in *distinct* classes, according to some *difference* between them. But as resemblances and differences may be endlessly varied, there may be different classifications of the same objects; and though one may be more *convenient* than another, all may be consistent with the nature of things.

In classifying the powers of the mind, we have no other guide, than the operations or mental states of which we are conscious. As we cannot look directly into the faculties of the mind, when not in exercise,

we can discover the resemblances and differences upon which a correct classification is to be founded, only by observing what the mind does, and from this, inferring the corresponding powers. Strictly speaking, these powers are as numerous, as the varieties in our mental operations. In classifying them, we can regard only the more prominent resemblances and differences.

THE WILL.

There has been no settled agreement with respect to that most important faculty called the will. European writers generally confine the term to the power of *ordering* some bodily or mental act. Volition, according to them, is determining to *do* something. A man wills to move his hand, or to think on a particular subject. In such cases, the act which is willed, immediately follows the volition. A man determines to speak, and he speaks; he wills to walk, and he walks. We frequently resolve to enter on a *course of conduct*, for the sake of obtaining some distant good. A man determines to devote himself to the acquisition of property, to gaining applause, to sensual gratification, or to a life of benevolent effort. Such a resolution is called a commanding purpose of

life, predominant inclination, governing state of the will, dominant preference, generic volition, &c. to distinguish it from those particular acts by which these general determinations are carried into execution.

In addition to both these classes of volitions, the New England divines, since the days of Edwards, at least, have very commonly considered *emotions or affections* as acts of the will. The elder Edwards says "I humbly conceive, that the affections of the soul are not properly distinguished from the will; as though they were two faculties in the soul."* "The affections are no other than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul."† But although emotions, purposes, and executive volitions are, in some respects, similar; yet, in other respects, they are different. Emotion is directed to an *object;* a purpose fixes on an *end;* an executive volition orders an *act.* Executive acts may depend on a predominant purpose; and the purpose may depend on antecedent emotions. A general purpose may look to some *distant* end; an executive volition relates to something which is *immediately* to

* Revival of Religion in New England, Part I.
† Treatise on Religious Affections, Part I.

follow. President Edwards himself has frequent occasion to make a subdivision of the acts of the will, into those which are *immanent* and those which are *imperative*.

Whatever classification of the mental powers we may think proper to adopt, it is of the first importance to bear steadily in mind, that distinct *faculties* are not distinct *agents*. They are different powers of one and the same agent. It is the *man* that perceives, and loves, and hates, and acts; not his understanding, or his heart, or his will, distinct from himself.

Some writers speak of the *power* of the will. If by this be meant the power of the mind to will, to put forth volitions; this is nothing more nor less than the will itself. But acts of the will may have a command over the motions of the body, and over certain operations of the mind. When a man wills to move his hand, it commonly obeys. When he wills to fix his attention on a particular subject, the current of thought may be turned into that channel. This appears to be what some intend by the expression the power of the will.

SECTION II.

SELF-DETERMINATION.

Point of inquiry.

Point of inquiry—It is the mind itself that wills—One act of the will determining another—Are volitions determined solely by the *nature* or *state* of the mind?—or by the *power* of willing—Contingent determination—*Originating* volition—Is the mind the *efficient* cause of its volitions?

THUS far, we have been mainly occupied, in explaining some of the ambiguities in mental philosophy, to prepare the way for the principal point of our inquiry, the self-determining power of the mind. The obstructions arising from indefinite language are not, even now, so far removed, as to render further explanation unnecessary. We shall still find occasion for it, in almost every step of our progress. Such is the unsettled condition of metaphysical phraseology, that we can scarcely make any advance in an argument, on the subject before us, without stopping continually, to explain the meaning of ambiguous terms.

Point of inquiry. The man himself wills.

The object of our inquiry, is not to learn whether the mind wills at all. This no one can doubt. Nor is it to determine *why* we will at all. The very nature of the faculty of will implies, that we put forth acts of will. But the real point of our inquiry is, why we will *one way rather than another;* why we choose one thing rather than its opposite; why one man wills to obey God, and another chooses to disobey him; why one prefers to go to the gaming table, while another goes to the house of prayer. What is it that determines not only that there shall *be* volitions, but *what* they shall be?

1. If the question be, whether the *man himself* decides between the objects of choice presented before him, there surely can be no doubt on this point, if it be admitted, that he wills at all. For to will, is nothing more nor less, than to decide in favor of an object of choice. If a man wills to walk, he determines to walk. And it is he himself that determines, Motives may *influence* him to walk or ride, to lie and steal. But motives do not lie and steal. Nor do they *will* to lie and steal. A man may be persuaded, by *others*, to will in a certain way. Their influence may give a direction to his choice. But his act is not their act. He himself chooses. He is the *author*

of his own volitions. This, according to *one* signification of the term, is self-determination. And a *power* of choosing is, in *this* sense, a self-determining power.

2. But this is not all that is ever meant, by the advocates of a self-determining power in the will. The inquiry still recurs, what determines the man to will as he does? What determines him to determine thus? Is it a *preceding* act of the will? This is undoubtedly the case, in many instances. Taking the will in its most enlarged acceptation, as including not only *executive* acts, but *purposes* and emotions, acts of one class may be determined, by those of another. A man purposes to go to the post-office: every step he takes, on his way, is determined by this purpose. And the purpose may have been determined, by some strong emotion; an eager desire, perhaps, to receive intelligence of the recovery of a friend from sickness, or the safe arrival of a richly freighted ship. Farther, the emotions themselves are commonly excited, either by *perceptions* of external realities, or by the internal imaginings of our own minds. Imperative acts of the will, then, may be preceded by purposes, the purposes by emotions, the emotions by perceptions, or the workings of imagination. But

all these belong to the mind. They do not reach beyond ourselves. So that, thus far, our emotions and volitions may be truly said to be self-determined.

Again, *present* acts may have an influence, in determining *future* volitions, by placing us in circumstances fitted to excite certain classes of emotions. The man of gaiety and mirth, banishes serious reflection, by throwing himself into a circle of jovial companions. The pious man rouses himself to charitable effort, by bringing into view the various plans of Christian benevolence. The man who has been heretofore intemperate, but has now taken a firm resolution to reform, guards himself against a violation of his vows, by giving his name to a temperance pledge, and avoiding the occasions which might inflame his appetite. In tracing back a series of acts, we may often find several successive steps *within* the mind, and therefore self-determined, as those which follow are dependent on those which precede. But *every* step cannot be dependent on another within the mind. For this would involve the absurdity of at least *one* step *before the first*, or else, of an *infinite* series of steps. The first act, then, must proceed from something within the mind which is *not an act*, or from something *without*, or from both together, or from *nothing*. The

last supposition implies absolute *contingence*, which we are soon to consider. If the first act of the series proceeds from some *mental state*, which is neither an act nor the substance of the mind; that state must have had an origin, either from without, or from something within, which, if we trace back the chain of dependencies, and do not admit contingence, any where, to break the series, will bring us to something without the mind.

We are not inquiring whether a man has *any thing* to do, in determining the nature of his own acts of will; but whether they are wholly independent of *every thing else;* whether any other being, or event, or thing, can have any share of influence, in connection with his own agency, to render his volitions different from what they would otherwise be. The inquiry, whether any thing exterior to the mind is concerned in determining the *mind itself* to will in a particular way, is very different from the inquiry, whether exterior influence determines *the volition*, without the agency of the mind. If it be said, that our mental exercises are dependent on our *propensities*, which are a part of ourselves; still it is to be considered, that our propensities are either *acquired*, in consequence of previous states of mind, in connection with

external circumstances; or are a part of the *original constitution* of the mind, received from its Creator. Or if it be supposed, that a man practices iniquity or virtue, because he has formed a sinful or holy *purpose;* or because, by his own acts, he has contracted a sinful or virtuous *habit;* yet his *first* sinful or virtuous act, on which the others are considered as dependent, did not proceed from a purpose or habit of his.

3. Is the kind of volitions which a man puts forth, determined by the *substance* and *nature* of his mind, independently of motives, external influences, &c.? This might be supposed to be the case, if the volitions of the same individual were all *perfectly uniform.* But they are very multifarious. One hour, he chooses to be active; another, to remain at rest. At one time, he is struggling against calamity; at another, exulting in the success of his plans and efforts. Why such frequent changes, if external circumstances have no influence on his actions?

The present nature of the mind is either *original* or *acquired,* or has been given by the Spirit of God. In either case, it is dependent on something preceding. If it is acquired, it is dependent on the man's original nature, together with the circumstances in which he has been placed. If the kind of volition

depends immediately and solely on the original nature of the mind, it depends on that which was given by the Creator. This is what some would call *physical* causation, producing physical depravity, or physical virtue. The advocates of independent self-determination, however, do not go so far, as to deny *all* dependence of volitions upon the nature of the mind. They will admit as much, at least, as this, that it is the mind which wills. Without agents, there can be no volitions. But to suppose that the *character* of volitions, as being right or wrong, sinful or holy, should depend on the substance of the mind, would imply, that they are dependent, for being as they are, on a nature which is *created*, and therefore not self-originated.

4. Some writers speak of the *power* of willing, as being the sole and sufficient cause, why the mind wills one way rather than another. But it is evident, that the mere power of willing is not, of itself alone, even the reason why a man *wills at all*; unless the term power be used in the broad and unusual sense, which includes *every* antecedent on which his willing depends. Is a man's power to walk, the only reason why he actually walks? Does a man always speak, when he has power to speak? It would be nearer

the truth to say, that he wills, because he has not the power to *avoid* willing, in some way or other. But whatever may be assigned as the reason why he wills at all, the main inquiry will still return upon us: Why does the mind will one way rather than another; why does it choose one object rather than its opposite? Is the simple power of willing the only cause of this? Does a man choose to walk to church for no other reason than because he has power to walk in any one of a thousand different directions? Does he speak the truth for no other reason, than because truth and falsehood are equally in his power? If the mind wills *contingently*, that is, without any direction from any thing preceding; it undoubtedly has the *power* to will thus. But an equal power to will *any* way *indifferently*, is not surely the only ground of willing one way *rather* than another. That which renders it certain, that the saints and angels in heaven will be uniformly and forever holy, is not merely the fact, that they have the same power to revolt, as to praise and adore. The only reason why fallen spirits invariably sin is not, that they have equal power to obey God and to rebel. Liberty to *either* side, does not turn the will uniformly to *one* side. Power to the contrary, does not bind the soul in unwavering devotedness

to its Maker. An equal chance of doing right and doing wrong, does not secure a course of uniform rectitude. If it be said, that there is really *no* cause or reason, why the will turns one way rather than the contrary; this brings us to contingent self-determination.

5. Shall we then, to avoid admitting any dependence of volitions, either immediate or remote, upon external influence, say that they are *dependent on nothing;* that the mind throws them off at random; that they *happen* to take place, without any ground or reason whatever, why they are as they are, rather than otherwise? This is the doctrine of *contingence;* of contingence in the absolute sense; not that which signifies, that the cause or reason is *unknown* or unobserved; but that which excludes *every thing* on which volitions may be supposed to depend, for being as they are; which implies that it is a matter of mere *accident*, that they take place as they do. According to this view of the case, a man's volitions are determined, not by the *man* himself, but by the *volitions* themselves; that is, they are determined only by the *event*, by their happening to be what they are. They are dependent, for their character, on nothing preceding. The question, then, for our consideration

is whether the volitions of accountable beings are *contingent*, or *dependent;* not whether they are dependent on the mind, objects of choice, &c., for coming into existence merely; but for being *such* volitions as they are, right or wrong, sinful or holy. The *mind*, it is admitted, puts forth volitions; but does it determine *of what sort* they shall be? Does any thing *else* determine this? Does any thing else make any *difference* in the volitions? Or is it a mere matter of accident, that they are as they are? If they are not dependent, they must be contingent, in the absolute sense in which we are now using the term. If they are not contingent, they must be dependent. For, from the very definition of the terms, one is the opposite of the other. There can be no *intermediate* supposition, unless it be that they are *partly* contingent and partly dependent. If dependence is inconsistent with *liberty*, then *so far* as there is dependence, liberty is impaired; it is enjoyed only so far as volitions are contingent.

If the kind of volitions which a man puts forth, is to be ascribed to accident, in *what part* of the series of mental acts, does this prolific contingence, this wonder-working nonentity, "this effectual no cause," do its work? Where does it break the connection, be-

tween volition and all preceding influence? Are *executive* acts of the will independent of purposes, and emotions, and appetites? Does the tippler resort to the dram shop without any inducement? Or if, at any time, he denies himself his accustomed indulgence, has he no motive for his abstinence? Is it from mere chance, that the demagogue courts the favor of his fellow citizens? When he shifts his plans and measures, as the popular breeze turns to different points of the compass, has he no purpose to answer by this? Is it as probable, that a man will act against *all* motives, as that he will yield to the influence of any? If an expert metaphysician, when occasion requires, can put himself into the posture of resisting all common inducements, is it certain that he is not prompted to this, by the motive of just showing how the will can work *without* motive?

Is the forming of *purposes*, the place where the dependence upon preceding influence is broken off. When a man resolves to devote his powers and labors to the calls of ambition, is it done independently of any love of distinction? When the Christian abandons his former pursuits, and forms the purpose of devoting his life to the service of God, does he do it without a *reason;* a reason of sufficient efficacy to

control his decision? Do men form resolutions, for the sake of obtaining those objects to which they are perfectly *indifferent*?

If it be admitted, that our imperative volitions are influenced by our purposes, and our purposes by our desires and appetites; shall we find in the *latter* the independence which contingent self-determination implies? When objects are brought before our minds, is it altogether a matter of accident, whether we shall be pleased with them or not? Is it as easy for us to be gratified with contemptuous treatment, as with applause? Is it an even chance, whether a miser will be most pleased with a guinea or a sixpence? In the case of the bodily appetites, the gratification depends on the correspondence between the external object and that part of the body which is affected by the object. So in the case of intellectual and moral enjoyment, there must be a correspondence between the subjects before the mind, and the state of the intellect and heart. But this mental state is not the product of chance. If volitions are not dependent on any thing preceding, for being as they are; if they are determined neither by the mind and its acts, nor by any thing without the mind, nor by both together; then they are not determined at all, unless it be in

this sense, that each volition is determined *by itself;* that is, it is determined, merely by taking place.

But, it may be asked, does not a man *originate* his own volitions? They undoubtedly *begin* with him, in this sense, that they have no existence, till *he* puts them forth. They are strictly *his* acts, and not the acts of another. They proceed *immediately* from him. They are not produced beforehand and afterwards put into his mind. He is truly their *author.* But does this imply, that dependence, in the case, can be traced no farther back than to the agent? From the fact, that he causes his own volitions, does it follow, that he is himself *uncaused*; that he also is self-originated? If he is not, his volitions are remotely, though not immediately, dependent on something besides himself. He has not originated all the causes from which his choices proceed. If it be said, that the *nature* of his volitions depends on nothing but the nature of the man; yet it is to be considered, that this nature of his must have had an origin from some cause. Or if there be a *state* of the mind which is different from its nature and its operations, and which is the cause of its volitions, that state is not the product of chance. Even those who maintain, that acts of the will are independent of every thing

preceding, for being what they are, do not, it is presumed, claim this privilege for any thing else. If volitions are thrown off *contingently*, so that, as far as their virtuous or vicious *character* is concerned, they depend neither on the nature, nor the state, nor the previous acts, of the agent; with what propriety can it be said, that *he* originates their sinfulness or holiness? According to the supposition, he merely *happens* to choose as he does.

Is a man the *efficient* cause of his own volitions? There surely can be no reasonable doubt on this point, if by efficient cause, be meant the *agent* who wills. To be the cause of volitions, in this sense, is nothing more nor less than to will. If it is the man himself that wills, it is he himself that is the efficient cause of his volitions. Or if, by the efficient cause, be meant the *immediate* antecedent, the man is, in this sense also, the efficient cause of his own choices. There is nothing *intervening* between him and his volitions, no connecting link, between the agent and his own acts. But if we apply the term efficient cause to *every thing* which is in any way concerned, in determining what a man's volitions shall be; we cannot say, that he is the *only* efficient cause of them, without setting aside the influence of external motives. This is the point which we have next to consider.

SECTION III.

INFLUENCE OF MOTIVES.

Nature of motives.

Nature of motives—*Internal* and *external* motives—Are motives mere *objects* of choice?—The *strongest* motive—Are motives the *cause* of volition?—Conditions and occasions of volition—Are motives the *efficient* cause of volition?—Are they the *certain* cause?—Is the efficacy of motives from the mind itself?—Willing *against* motives—Are volitions determined by the understanding?—Do they obey the strongest motive?

THIS subject of contingent self-determination, or more properly, of no determination, is nearly allied to the inquiry concerning the nature and influence of *motives*. That which moves, inclines, induces, or influences the mind to will, and to will in a particular way, or which has a *tendency* thus to move it, is commonly called a motive. When we ask a man, from what motive he acted, in a specified case, we mean to inquire, what it was which induced or influenced him to act in this manner. An object which is in

view of the mind, has a *tendency* to move the will, when it will *actually* move it, unless counteracted by some opposing influence. We say that every portion of matter around us has a tendency to fall towards the center of the earth, because it will in fact fall, unless prevented by something which obstructs its motion in that direction. A motive may have a tendency to move the will in a particular way, at the same time, that a more powerful motive, may really move it in a different way.

There is an ambiguity in the use of the term motive, corresponding to the indefinite signification of the term will. In the language of some writers, a volition may be either an imperative act, a purpose, or an emotion. The motive to an imperative act, may be a wish to execute some previous purpose. The motive to a purpose, is the desire of obtaining some object which is viewed as eligible. That which immediately excites the volition in this case, is an affection of the mind, an emotion, an *internal* motive. But that which excites the emotion itself, may be an object *without* the mind, an *external* motive. A tree loaded with fair and delicious fruit, excites desire in the beholder. This desire may move him to pluck the fruit. The fruit itself is an external motive. The

desire which stimulates to the act of gathering it, is an internal motive. One act of will, therefore, in the more enlarged acceptation of the term will, may be the motive to another act. The affections, which, by some, are considered as volitions, may be the motives to purposes and executive volitions. A motive, according to the common use of the term, must have some *tendency*, at least, either to excite desire, or to stimulate to action; though this tendency may often be counteracted and overbalanced, by motives of an opposite nature.

A mere *object*, which is apprehended by the understanding only, and which has no influence upon the will, is not commonly called a motive. But the philosophy of some appears to exclude all influence of motives, in determining the will. Yet they continue the use of the term. To this it would be unreasonable to object, provided they always let us know, that by the word motive, they mean a mere object of choice, presented to the understanding; and not any thing which has an influence upon the will. An external motive, as the term is commonly understood, is also an object. But an object of perception is not, in every case, a motive. It may be viewed with entire indifference.

The strongest motive.

When different motives are compared together, that which has the *greatest tendency* to move the will, is said to be the *strongest*. The motive to effort, from a reward of ten dollars, is greater than from five. The efficacy of an external motive must depend not merely on the object itself, but upon the correspondence between that and the state of the mind. The same object may be viewed, by one man, with eager desire, by another, with aversion, by a third, with indifference. A motive, as has been already observed, is commonly understood to be something which excites the mind to will, or which has a *tendency* to do this. But if volitions are entirely *contingent;* if they are independent of every thing preceding, for being as they are; then it is idle to talk of motives at all, using the term in its common acceptation. In this sense, there *are* no motives; though there must be *objects* of choice before the mind, to give it an *opportunity* of choosing between them. Without these, there would not be even a *chance* for volition. But objects of choice, according to the supposition, have no tendency to turn the decision of the mind in favor of one rather than another. They may move the will to volition in the abstract, but not to the choice of any particular thing. If a man prefers a bed of down

to a bed of thorns, it is a mere accident; or because his will, in the plenitude of its sovereign power, takes that direction. It is not because the down has any *influence* on his decision. If he prefers an ample fortune to bankruptcy, it is not because the one has any tendency, more than the other, to allure his choice.

But are motives the *causes* of volition? According to Dr. Reid, motives influence, but do not cause acts of the will. The meanings of the term cause are so various, some of them limited, and others more extended, that the assertion, that motives are the cause of volition, ought not to be made, without many qualifications. That they are the *sole* cause is certainly not true, if the word cause be used to signify *every* antecedent on which the effect depends. Motives do not produce volitions without a mind. They are not the *agent*. They do not love and hate, resolve and choose. External motives are not of such a nature, that volitions of a certain character invariably proceed from them, independently of the nature, and state, and feelings of the mind, which acts in view of them. But if a motive has any influence on the determination of the will, it is *one* of the antecedents on which the volition depends. Yet if it is an

external object, it is not the *immediate* antecedent. An executive volition must be preceded by an *emotion*. This is an act or state of the mind. Before this emotion can be felt, there must be an *apprehension* of the object. This is also a state of the mind. Apprehension and emotion must both intervene, between the external motive and the volition. The object, then, can have no influence on the volition, except by influencing the mind; in other words, there must be not only a motive, but an agent. The agent does not will without motives; nor do motives will without an agent.

It is frequently said, that motives are not the cause, but the *condition* or *occasion* of volition. This phraseology may be very proper, provided it be granted, that volition is, in any degree, *dependent* on motives. It is immaterial, for the purpose of our present inquiry, whether volitions are determined by causes, or occasions, or conditions, or inducements, or by all these together; if it be admitted that they have any *influence* in the determination; if a change in these will make a *difference* in the volitions. But it may be said that agents and motives, causes and conditions, are really different; and ought, therefore, to be called by different names. Let them, then, have different

Are motives the efficient or certain cause of volition ?

names. But the one class may be as really concerned in determining volition, as the other, though in a very different way. Calling motives conditions or occasions, rather than causes, does not prove that they are void of all influence. The dependence of volition on its *conditions*, may be as absolute, as on its *causes*. If it can be shown, that motives are mere *objects* of choice, and that they never do any thing more, than give an *opportunity*, a *chance* of willing; then it is improper to speak of them, as having any concern in determining the consequent volition to be one way rather than another: without them, there can be no choice; and where they exist, it is a matter of absolute contingence, whether the will complies with them or not.

But are motives the *efficient* cause of volition? If by efficient cause be meant the *agent*, the being who wills, no one supposes that, in this sense, motives are efficient. They do not purpose, and resolve, and choose. Or if by efficient cause be meant the *immediate* antecedent of volition, this can not be an external motive. Between that and the volition, there must intervene an apprehension of the object, and consequent feeling excited in the mind. Nor are motives the *certain* cause of volition, in the sense,

that the same volitions will invariably follow from the same external motives, whatever may be the state of the mind to which they are presented, or whatever other motives may be before it, at the same time. Still, it may be true, that the same mind, or minds in every respect alike, in precisely the same state, in the same circumstances, and under the same influence of every kind, will certainly choose in the same way.

The concurrence of the mind, in giving efficacy to motives, is evident from the fact, that the *same* external object will excite in *different* minds very different feelings, and lead to very different choices. The entrance of an individual into a social circle, may draw admiration from some of the company, and envy from others. An event which makes a very *deep* impression upon a man of acute sensibility, may make a very *slight* one, upon a person of cooler temperament. An object may excite very different feelings, even in the *same* mind, at different times. The merry song, which has been so welcome to a man in his hours of gaiety, may find a discordant feeling in his breast, when he is borne down with affliction.

The diversity of effects produced upon different minds, by the same external object, is probably the reason why some writers ascribe the *efficacy* of mo-

Is the efficacy of motives from the mind?

tives to the mind itself. The true state of the case is, that the efficacy belongs to *both;* or to the relation between one and the other. The influence of an external motive will vary, with the state of the mind to which it is presented. And the feelings excited in the mind will vary, as the objects before it are changed. If motives and the state of the mind are not *both* concerned, in determining the acts of the will, then they must be determined either by the *mind alone*, so that whatever be the motives presented, its volitions will be the same; or by *motives alone*, so that whatever be the state of the mind, the volitions will be the same.

The power of the mind over the objects which it contemplates, is not such, that it can make them all agreeable, and in any degree, at its bidding. If this were the case, happiness would be of easy attainment. We should merely have to will that every thing which we hear, and see, and feel, should be to us sources of enjoyment only. We could be unhappy in no other way, than by choosing to be so. It would be folly for a man to labor and toil to be rich, when by a mere act of the will, he could derive as much gratification from poverty as from wealth. The galley slave, by resolving to be as well pleased with his clanking

chains, as with freedom on his native hills, might set at defiance the malice of his oppressors. The victim of the inquisition might effectually disarm the rage of his persecutors by willing to make torture as welcome as repose. This would be a self-determining power of some value.

May not our *volitions*, however, be in *opposition* to our feelings? We may undoubtedly, oppose *some* of our desires, for the sake of gratifying others. But what motive can a man have to will against *all* motives? Willing, at least in the case of imperative acts, is determining to *do* something; and that, for the sake of obtaining the objects of our desire. When such objects are before the mind, can we will to turn away from them, for the sake of something which is *not*, on any account, desired? If objects of desire have no *tendency* to move the will in a particular direction, they are not, properly speaking, motives. If they *have* such a tendency, they must actually move the will, provided there is nothing which has a tendency to move it in a different direction. When on one side, there is *no* influence, *any* influence on the opposite side must turn the scale. Whatever does not do this, has no influence in the case.

Willing against motives. The strongest motives.

If it be said, that acts of the *understanding*, without feeling, may be sufficient to determine the will; then these intellectual acts become *motives*. They have an *influence* on volition. The will is not left to be the sport of blind contingence. Our acts of choice are not always controlled by those emotions which appear to be the *most vivid*. We often find a determined and settled purpose, apparently calm, but unyielding, which carries a man steadily forward, amid all the solicitations of appetite and passion. The miser's predominant inclination, brings all his other feelings in subjection to this. The inflexible determination of Howard, gave law to his emotions, and guided his benevolent movements. The triumphs of principle over passion are frequently seen, in the commanding influence which a settled propensity exercises, over feelings apparently more violent. A man's regard for his own future welfare, or the interests of the divine kingdom, may prevail against the importunate demands of present gratification. Principle, in such cases, is really a *stronger motive*, than passion; that is, it has a greater tendency to control the acts of the will.

May not *weaker* motives sometimes prevail over those which are *stronger*? A number of feeble mo-

tives by their *united* influence, may overbalance a more powerful single one. If we have any meaning, when we speak of the comparative strength of motives, it must be this, that one has a greater tendency than another to determine the will. To say, then, that a weaker motive prevails against a stronger one, is to say, that that which has the least influence in the case, has the greatest. If it be said, that *something else* gives to the weaker motive a superiority over the stronger; then this something else is itself a motive, and the united influence of the two, is greater than that of the third. If, as some seem to suppose, there is no propriety in speaking of the comparative strength of different motives; as this implies too near a resemblance between *moral* influence, and *physical* energy; then it is improper to say, that a bribe of a thousand dollars is a stronger temptation, than one of a shilling; or that the dread of imprisonment for life, has any greater influence, in deterring from the commission of crimes, than the fear of being subjected to a trifling fine. Motives must certainly have *equal*, or *unequal* strength, or none at all. If they have *no* strength, they have no tendency to give direction to the acts of the will; that is, they are *not* motives, in the sense in which the term is commonly understood.

The strongest motives.

If it be still urged, that the will may decide against the strongest influence, without any reason whatever; that it will sometimes comply with motives, and sometimes resist them, and that, without any motive for resisting; then we are brought back again to all-powerful contingence, to the uncontrollable supremacy of nonentity. It is this which determines whether motives shall have any efficacy or not. Sometimes our choices *happen* to be in accordance with them; and sometimes they happen to take the opposite direction; so that chance, after all, is the supreme law of volition.

SECTION IV.

LIBERTY AND NECESSITY.

Common notion of liberty.

Common notion of liberty—Internal freedom—Liberty of *contingence*—External liberty—Liberty *to either side*—Power to the contrary—Cousin's view of this—Dr. Edwards on *natural* power to the contrary, and on natural and moral inability—Power to contrary *emotions*—Liberty a privilege—Necessity is the opposite of liberty—Philosophical necessity—Natural and moral necessity—Is certainty necessity?—Edwards on moral necessity.

In the opinion of many, self-determination is essential to *liberty*. Before we can decide this point, it will be necessary to ascertain what liberty is. No phraseology commonly applied to the will, is more ambiguous, than the term liberty or freedom. As used by metaphysical writers, it has, at least, half a a dozen different meanings.

1. The first is that which is given it in common discourse. A man is said to have liberty, or to be free, when he does *what he chooses to do;* when the

acts of his will are carried into execution. This is the only meaning attached to the term, in the familiar language of common life. It is called personal, or civil, or political, or natural liberty, according to the nature of the conditions by which it is limited or modified. In all these cases, however, it refers to *external conduct.* It implies a correspondence between a man's volitions and his actions. If he goes where he chooses, and does what he will, he is said to be free. His freedom consists in exemption from *restraint* and *compulsion;* in not being prevented from doing that which he wills to do, and not being compelled to do that which he does not will to do. This is what is frequently called *external* liberty. It is a freedom from every thing which will interfere with the fixed connection between volition and external acts.

2. But philosophers have had occasion to give various other meanings to the term liberty; particularly to that which is called *internal* or *mental* freedom. It is used, in the second place, to signify not our *doing* as we will, but *willing* as we will. As freedom with respect to external actions, consists in their being dependent on our volitions; so it seems to be thought by some, that the freedom of our volitions themselves, consists in their dependence on *previous* volitions. As

we are not accountable for an action which did not proceed from our choice; so it is supposed, that we are not accountable for an act of choice, unless it has proceeded from *antecedent* choice; unless we have *chosen to choose.*

3. Liberty of will, as distinguished from external liberty, is represented by some, as consisting in the dependence of our *imperative* volitions upon our predominant *desires;* so that a man always wills as he pleases or wishes; his imperative volitions invariably following the strongest internal motives.

4. The three definitions now given, imply a *dependence* of an external or a mental act upon something preceding. But according to some philosophers, internal freedom implies, that the will is not subject to the determining influence of motives, or the nature or state of the mind, or any thing preceding, which is itself dependent on any thing without the mind. It must be altogether self-determined. This is what is sometimes called *liberty to either side,* liberty of indifference, or more properly, of equilibrium, of equal tendencies to opposite directions. As civil liberty is frequently supposed to be an exemption from all regulations of law; so mental liberty is thought, by some, to be a freedom from all determining influence of mo-

tives, or of any thing from without. This may be called the liberty of *contingence*. It is contingent self-determination, expressed in different terms.

5. A more scriptural meaning of freedom, is an exemption from the controlling influence and bondage of evil propensities and passions.

> "He is the freeman, whom the truth makes free;
> And all are slaves beside."

This may be called, for distinction's sake, *moral* freedom. It is far from implying, that the acts of the will are independent of *all* antecedent influence. They are brought under the guidance of right and virtuous principles. "Being made free from sin," says the apostle, "ye became the servants of righteousness."*

6. Others still consider mental liberty as consisting simply in the *power of willing;* that is in having a will. According to them, whoever wills is free.

It is not my purpose to object to the use of the term liberty, in either of these senses. An author has a right to use words and phrases in his own way, and even in *different* senses, if by the position which

* Romans vi. 18.

he gives them in connection with other words, and by proper explanations, he guards effectually against misapprehension. But it is highly important, that the various and contrary significations of the term liberty, be not confounded with each other, as they very frequently are, in discussions upon the nature and powers of the will. Many appear to think, that when they have proved that man has liberty, according to some particular meaning, they have shewn that he must have it, in every other sense of the word. Whatever a *politician* chooses to call liberty, will pass current, with the unreflecting portion of the community: so whatever a *metaphysician* denominates liberty, will have its influence upon those who are governed by *names*, without giving themselves the trouble to inquire into their meaning.

Those who plead for contingent self-determination, or adopt a theory which implies this, often claim for themselves the exclusive right to be considered the advocates of liberty. If this assumption be conceded to them, it ought to be distinctly understood, according to which of the numerous meanings of the term, liberty is peculiar to their system. Those who believe in the dependence of volitions upon motives as well as agents, are also decided advocates of liberty.

External liberty.

But they do not engage to give their sanction to every strange or even absurd combination of ideas, to which any philosopher may think proper to annex the term, however contrary it may be to the signification of the word, as sanctioned by common usage. Nor do they admit the justice of being treated, on this account, as opposers of liberty. It is agreed on all hands, that with respect to external actions, we are free, when we *do as we will;* when there is such an established connection between our volitions and our actions, that the latter invariably follow from the other. When we will to walk, we walk, if we are free; when we will to speak, we speak; when we will to move the hand, it moves. Now is internal liberty, or liberty of will, the direct *opposite* of this? Does it imply, that there is *no* dependence of our volitions on antecedent feelings; that they are as often contrary to our desires, as conformable to them; that however ardently a man may love God, and seek to serve him, this has no controlling influence over his purposes and executive acts? If dependence of our volitions on *any* thing preceding be admitted, must it be antecedent *volitions* only, of the same mind, running back into an infinite series?

Liberty to either side. Cousin on power to the contrary.

According to the advocates of independent self-determination, liberty of the will implies a *freedom to either side;* that is, a freedom to one thing or its opposite. This is otherwise expressed, by saying that, whenever a man acts freely, he has *power to the contrary.* Cousin says, "When I open this book, am I not conscious of opening it, and conscious also of *power not to open it?* When I look, do I not know, at once, that I look, and that I am able not to look?"

"Now an action performed with the consciousness of power not to do it, is what men have called a *free* action; for there is no longer in it the characteristic of necessity." "Liberty is the attribute neither of the sensibility, nor of the intelligence; it belongs to the activity, and not to all the facts which are referable to that, but merely to a certain number, marked by peculiar characteristics, namely, acts which we perform, with the consciousness of doing them, and of *being able not to do them.*"* *In a certain sense,* this is undoubtedly true. In reference to *external conduct,* a man is free, when he does as he wills, that is, when, if he wills to move, he moves, if he wills the contrary, he remains at rest; if he wills to speak, he

* Cousin's Psychology, pp. 249, 250.

speaks, if he wills the contrary, he is silent. But does liberty imply, that when a man wills a certain act, it is no more likely to follow, than the contrary act; that his limbs will as soon move against his will, as with it; in other words, that there is no dependence of his external actions upon his choice, no established connection between what he does, and what he wills to do; that with the *same volitions*, his actions might be different? A man has power to move his hand in opposite directions. Does this imply, that his *hand* has power to move in opposite directions, *in defiance of all influence of the will?* If such were the fact, could he be truly said to have power over his motions? Are not a man's bodily motions in his power, when they infallibly follow the direction of his will.

But the advocates of a liberty to either side, would probably consider it as relating not so much to external conduct, as to acts of the will. Cousin is sufficiently explicit in stating, that internal liberty belongs neither to the *antecedents* nor to the *consequents* of volition. "When the intellect has judged that this or that is to be done, from such or such motives; it remains to pass on to action, and at once to *resolve*, to take sides, to say to ourselves no longer, I *ought* to do, but, I *will* do. Now the faculty which says, I

ought to do it, is not and cannot be the faculty which says, I will do it, I take the resolution to do it. Here the action of the intelligence completely ceases. I ought to do it, is a judgment; I will do it, is not a judgment, nor consequently an intellectual phenomenon. In fact, the moment we take the *resolution* to do an action, we take it with a consciousness of being *able to take a contrary resolution.* See, then, a new element, which must not be confounded with the former. This element is the *will.* One moment before, we were in a state of judgment and knowledge; now we are in a state of willing." "The total action which we were to analyze, resolves itself into three elements perfectly distinct: 1. the *intellectual* element,—2. the *voluntary* element, which consists in an internal act, namely, the resolution,—3. the *physical* element, or external action."

"If these three elements exhaust the action, that is to say, the phenomenon in which we have recognized the character of liberty, in opposition to the phenomena of intelligence and sensation; the question now to be decided is, precisely in which of these three elements, *liberty* is to be found, that is, the power of doing, with the consciousness of being able not to do? Does this power belong to the first element,

the *intellectual* element of the free action? It does not." "Still less is it in the third element, in the *physical* action." "It can, then, only be in the second, and there we find it." "Liberty exists in the pure power of willing, which is always accompanied by the consciousness of the power to will (I do not say power to *think*, or power to *act*, but power to *will*) the *contrary* of what it wills."*

In what sense, is it true, that a man has power to will the contrary of what he actually wills? He has such power that with a *sufficient inducement*, he will make an opposite choice. If he now chooses to sit still, and if you set before him an adequate motive, he will choose to walk abroad. But has he not *power*, you ask, to choose otherwise than he does, even though it be certain, that he will never exercise that power, unless there is some change in his feelings, or in the motives before him? A correct answer to this question, must depend upon the extent of meaning here given to the word power. A man may have *some* power, and not have *all* power; that is, he may not have all that upon which the result depends. There may be something, either within or without his

* Psychology, pp. 251, 2, 3, 8.

mind, which will render a particular volition certain, notwithstanding his power to the contrary. If the word power be used in its broadest sense, as including not only opportunity, knowledge, capacity, &c., but *motives of all kinds;* it is *not* true, that a man has always equal power, that is, equal inducements, to opposite volitions. Has an honest man the same inducement to lie, which he has to speak the truth? Has the intemperate man the same inducement to keep sober, which he has to drink to excess? When the saints in heaven bow in adoration before the throne of God and the Lamb; are they equally inclined to join apostate spirits in their rebellion? When Satan, "as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour;" is he equally inclined to promote the salvation of men?

But if the word power be used here, according to its more common acceptation, so as *not* to include motives and the state of feeling, this is not inconsistent with such a strength of inclination, as will certainly prevent any contrary volition. A man has as much power to speak the truth, *if he will,* as he has to utter falsehood. And he has as much power to *will* to speak the truth, *if his feelings are so inclined,* as he has to will to lie. But has he a power which

will determine him to will one way, while his feelings are wholly inclined to will the contrary way? In many cases, there may be conflicting emotions in a man's mind, and therefore *some* power of motive in opposite directions. But when he comes to a decision, are the motives on the opposite sides always equal? Is it not the preponderance of one over the other which turns the scale? In every act of choice, is the agent equally *pleased* with the opposite sides? If not, is it a mere matter of chance, which way his volition will turn? The man who wills in a particular way, under the influence of certain feelings, might undoubtedly will differently, *under a different influence.* But while the same mind continues in precisely the same state, in the same circumstances, and under the same influence of every kind, has it power to will in opposite directions; or if it has this power, will it ever use it?

If in asserting a power to contrary volitions, nothing more is meant, than that a *different influence* might occasion an opposite decision of the will; this is not inconsistent with the dependence of volition on the state of the heart, external motives, natural sensibilities, acquired propensities, &c. The younger Edwards, a strenuous advocate for the certain con-

nection between volitions and their causes, admits, that the power of acting implies, at the same time, a power of not acting. But he takes special care to guard this admission against the inference, that our volitions are independent of the influence of motives. Quoting, from Dr. West, the assertion, that "by liberty, we mean a power of acting, willing, or choosing; and by a power of acting, we mean, that when all circumstances necessary for action have taken place, the mind *can act* or *not act*;" he replies: "This is not explicit. There is an ambiguity in the words *power, can, not act.* If by *power* and *can*, he mean *natural* power, as it has been explained in the preceding chapter; I agree that, in any given case, we have power to act, or decline the proposed action." "A man possesses liberty, when he possesses a natural or physical power to do an action, and is under no natural inability with respect to that action." "If *this* be the liberty for which Dr. West pleads, he has no ground of controversy, on this head, with President Edwards, or with any who embrace his system. There is nothing in this inconsistent with the *influence of motives* on the will, to produce volition; or with the *dependence* of volition on some cause extrinsic to itself, extrinsic to the power of will, or to the mind

in which it exists." Referring to Dr. West's illustration of the power of choosing between things which appear to be equally eligible, he says: "If by power he mean *natural* or *physical* power, I grant, that we have *such* a power, to choose not only one of several things equally eligible, if any such there be, but one of things ever so unequally eligible, and to take the least eligible."* Again he says, "it has been inquired concerning President Edwards' moral inability, whether the man who is the subject of it, *can remove it?* I answer, yes, he has the same *physical* power to remove it, and to do the action, which he is *morally unable* to do, which the man concerning whom Dr. West supposes there is a certainty, that he will not do an action, has to do the action, and so to defeat or remove the said certainty. I agree with Dr. West, that he has a *physical* power so to do."†

What Dr. Edwards intends, by saying that a man has *natural* or *physical* power to do that which he is *morally unable* to do, will be easily understood by attending to the view which he has taken of natural and moral inability and necessity, in the chapter to which he here refers. Though these terms, as used

* Essays on Liberty and Necessity, pp. 20, 21, 32. † p. 18.

by different writers, are abundantly ambiguous, yet he is sufficiently explicit, in stating what signification *he* means to give them. "*Moral* necessity," he says, "is the certain or necessary connection between *moral causes* and *moral effects*. *Natural* necessity is the connection between causes and effects which are *not* of a moral nature." "The distinction between natural and moral *inability* is analogous to this. Inability is the reverse of necessity;"* that is, a man is under an inability to do a particular thing, when he is under a necessity of *not* doing it. According to Dr. Edwards, then, a man may have *natural* power to do that, which the want of *moral* power will infallibly prevent him from doing. "Moral necessity," he says, "is the real and certain connection between some moral action and its cause; and there is no moral necessity in the case, unless the connection be real and *absolutely certain*, so as to *ensure* the existence of the action."† And his father says; "Moral necessity may be as *absolute* as natural necessity; that is, the effect may be as perfectly connected with its moral cause, as a natural necessary effect is, with its natural cause." "As it must be allowed, that

* Essays on Liberty and Necessity, pp. 6, 7. † p. 15.

there may be such a thing as a *sure* and *perfect* connection between moral causes and their effects; so *this only* is what I call by the name of moral necessity."* According to these writers, then, a man may have a *natural* power to make a contrary choice, although, at the same time, he is *morally* unable to do it; that is, he is under the influence of such motives, as will infallibly prevent him from thus willing. It may be thought by some, that by a *purpose* or *resolve*, we have power to give our volitions a contrary direction. But do we form purposes, independently of all motives, from within and from without? Will the same influence, operating upon precisely the same state of mind, lead to opposite purposes and volitions?

If we pass from our purposes, to our *affections* or *emotions*, shall we *here* find the liberty to either side? It is manifest, that *different objects* may produce different feelings in the same mind; and the *same* objects will produce different feelings in different minds. But while the same objects are viewed, in the same manner, by a mind continuing in precisely the same state of susceptibility, will the affections excited by these

* Edwards on the Will, Part i. Sec. 4.

objects be so changed, as to become of an opposite character? Or does the state of the mind itself become contrary to what it was before, without any cause whatever? If it be admitted, that our emotions have any dependence on any thing preceding, will it still be urged, that the antecedents must, in every case, be so exactly balanced, that the *tendencies* to a particular emotion and its opposite shall be equal?

Will it be said, that our volitions are *partly* contingent, and partly dependent on something preceding; that there may be *some* influence from motives, and at the same time, a power of acting in opposition to motives? To this, it may be answered, that if the very nature of liberty of will, implies freedom to either side, then so far as this is controlled, and our volitions are determined by the influence of motives, by the state of the affections, or by any thing else, liberty is impaired. The saint in heaven, who is under the influence of such motives, as invariably excite in him holy volitions, has not the liberty of which we are now speaking. Contingence and dependence are incompatible with each other. So far as one prevails, the other can have no place. If our volitions are wholly contingent, they are, in no degree, subject to the determining influence of motives.

Power to contrary emotions.

Why have metaphysicians given to the terms liberty and power, when applied to the will, a meaning so different from that which they bear in customary use, and in reference to external conduct? In common language, a man enjoys liberty, when he does as he wills; that is, when there is a *fixed connection* between his acts and his volitions. The more invariable this dependence, the more perfect is his liberty. Whatever interrupts this connection, impairs his freedom. But according to some philosophers, liberty of will requires, that there should be *no* dependence of our volitions upon any thing preceding, for being as they are, rather than otherwise. External liberty consists in a man's acting uniformly, in conformity with his will. Does internal liberty imply, that he frequently wills in *opposition* to his supreme affection? When we say that a man has power to the contrary external action, we mean, that *if his will were different*, the action would be different. But some who speak of a power to contrary volitions, seem to mean, that under the *same* influence, and in the same state of mind, the volitions may be different. It is a power of contingence, a capacity of being subject to accident. Is not the term power, as it is frequently used, a mere "metaphysical sound," which

Liberty a privilege. Necessity opposed to liberty.

is to produce its effect, not by any distinct signification, in the connection in which it is introduced; but by association with feelings excited by the word, in cases of a very different nature?

Liberty is commonly considered a *privilege*. But what privilege is conferred by the liberty of contingence; a freedom of our volitions from all influence of motives; of argument, and persuasion, and affections? Suppose a man were to be endowed with a will which should put forth volitions wholly at random, without any regard to his feelings; that if these should urge him ever so strongly to go one way, his will would determine he should go in an opposite direction; that however much he might be pleased with obeying God, his volitions would lead him to disobey; would this be the perfection of liberty? Or suppose his volitions should spring up, without any cause, or reason, or influence whatever, either from within or from without; would this be the most desirable condition of his being?

NECESSITY.

That which is the *opposite* of liberty, is commonly called *necessity*. But as various significations have been given to the term liberty, and each of these may

Necessity opposed to liberty. Philosophical necessity.

have its opposite; necessity also has a corresponding variety of meanings. As liberty, in familiar use, signifies *doing as we will;* so necessity, as it is most commonly understood, is something which *prevents* us from doing as we will. It implies *opposition* to our choice. It is either *compulsion*, forcing us to do that which we will not do; or *restraint*, withholding us from doing that which we will to do. As liberty supposes an established *connection* between our volitions and our outward acts; necessity, on the contrary, implies an *interruption* of this connection. If a man's limbs, when affected with convulsions, move against his will, he is necessitated to let them move. If in a palsy, they refuse to move at his bidding, he is laid under a necessity not to move them.

But philosophers have found occasion to give very different meanings to the term necessity. They have applied it where, from the very nature of the case, there *can be* no opposition of will. A man may be compelled to *do* that which is contrary to his choice. But how can he be compelled to *choose* that which is contrary to his choice; to will that which, at the moment, he does not will? He may, at one time, choose that which is contrary to what he had chosen, at *another* time; and it is easy to see how this change

may be effected by external influence. But can he be either induced or compelled to will that which, at the *same time*, is opposed to his will? As some have made the *liberty* of the will to consist in a freedom from the determining influence of motives; so to be subject to such motives, they have called necessity. But if a man can be determined, by motives, to will in a particular way, this does not imply, that he is induced to will *against* his will. The use of a term in so different and in some respects, opposite senses, is the occasion of numberless misapprehensions. According to some philosophers, the *dependence* of our volitions upon any thing preceding is necessity; whereas, in common language, the *want* of dependence of our actions upon our volitions, is what is called necessity. Why should necessity, in the one case, signify dependence, and in the other, the *opposite* of dependence.

Liberty and necessity are generally understood to be inconsistent with each other. But if very diverse meanings are given to both these terms, it is not certain, that every kind of liberty is inconsistent with every thing which any one may choose to call necessity. If it be said, that all necessity is necessity, and that in relation to liberty, it makes no difference, of

what kind the necessity is; it may be answered, that what is sometimes *called* necessity, is *not* necessity, in any proper acceptation of the term. It is to be regretted, that writers on both sides of the question concerning the power of the will have given occasion to numerous and great misapprehensions, by adopting this confusion of language respecting necessity. The danger of mistake may be lessened, but is far from being removed, by observing the distinction between *natural* and *moral* necessity. The discrimination may be accurately and clearly stated; but an eager controversial writer may easily practice an illusion upon a large portion of his readers, if not upon himself, by confounding the different meanings, or by insensibly substituting one for the other. And when metaphysical philosophy is dealt out to the common people, they will be sure to interpret the language, according to the customary use of the terms, in their own walks of life. With them, necessity will be necessity, however much you may define and explain. You may state definitely the difference between common and *philosophical* necessity; but very few will be philosophical enough to keep the distinction steadily in view.

Philosophical necessity.

It is sometimes said, that the connection between volitions and the antecedents on which they depend is *certain*, but not *necessary*. By this may be meant, that certain connection and dependence imply no *opposition* to acts of the will; no compulsion or constraint. But according to others, the certain connection of antecedents and consequents is itself necessity, whether there be any opposition to the will or not. The argument from necessity, in favor of contingent self-determination, is a play upon the ambiguity of terms. All agree, that a necessity which is *opposed* to our choice, is inconsistent with liberty. Coercion, compulsion, restraint, that is, opposition to our will, is the very quality to which the inconsistency with freedom belongs. And when philosophers have given the name of necessity to that in which there is *no opposition* to our choice, they still insist, that as necessity is necessity, of whatever kind it may be, it must, in all cases, be inconsistent with liberty. If one wishes to represent any relation or quality whatever as essential to volition, he has only to call it *liberty;* and if he would make the impression, that a particular relation, dependence for example, is incompatible with volition and freedom, he has only to call it *necessity;* and this will pass for argument, with those

who are accustomed, in their reasoning, to pay more attention to the *sound* of words, than to their signification. By common readers, the term necessity, however it may be applied by the writer, will be understood to mean that which is opposed to the will.

The expression *moral necessity*, adopted for the purpose of avoiding ambiguity, is itself ambiguous. It is frequently used to signify a high degree of *probability* merely; an *approach* to necessity, where there is not supposed to be any infallible certainty. The first President Edwards and his son are sufficiently explicit, in stating what *they* mean by moral necessity. With them, it is "a *sure* and *perfect* connection between moral causes and effects." It "may be as *absolute* as natural necessity." "A man's evil dispositions may be as strong and immovable, as the bars of a castle."* "Moral necessity is the *certain* or *necessary* connection between moral causes and moral effects."† It is observable, however, that these very logical writers, in their definitions of moral necessity, both use the word *moral* in different senses: so difficult is it to avoid altogether the use of ambiguous terms. Moral necessity, is defined to be "a cer-

* Edwards on the Will: Part I. Sec. 4. Part IV. Sec. 4.

† Dr. Edwards, on Liberty and Necessity, p. 6.

tain or necessary connection between *moral causes* and *moral effects*." The moral *effects* here spoken of are, evidently, *volitions;* that is, acts which are *themselves* right or wrong, sinful or holy, and which are, for this reason, denominated moral. But what are here called moral *causes*, are not always right or wrong, sinful or holy. They are probably spoken of as moral, because they are the causes of *moral effects*. Among these causes are mentioned, by President Edwards, "*motives* exhibited to the *understanding*." And Dr. Edwards says, "By moral necessity,"——"I mean *all* necessity or previous certainty of the volition or voluntary action of a rational being, *whatever be the cause* or influence by which that necessity is established." "Though volitions may be the effects of a bias of mind born with us, yet those volitions are *moral* acts, and *therefore* the necessity from which they proceed, is a moral necessity."* The *effects* are called moral, because they are *themselves* right or wrong; but the *causes* are called moral, because right or wrong actions *proceed* from them. Dr. Samuel Clarke observes, that "moral necessity, in true and philosophical strictness, is not indeed *any necessity at all;* but

* Essays on Liberty and Necessity, p. 13, 19.

is merely a *figurative* manner of speaking."* And even President Edwards says; "I have largely declared, that the connection between antecedent things and consequent ones, which takes place with regard to the acts of men's wills, which is called *moral necessity*, is called by the name of necessity *improperly*."† He speaks of it as a *metaphysical speculative* and *abstract* notion. If an expression which is so liable to be misinterpreted, is still retained in use, it ought to be employed with very great caution, and to be accompanied with such explanations as will effectually guard it against perversion.

* Answer to Collins, p. 15.

† Remarks on the Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion.

SECTION V.

ABILITY AND INABILITY.

Inability in relation to external conduct.

Inability in relation to external conduct—Natural and moral inability—*Opposition* to the will belongs to natural inability—Inability in relation to acts of the will—President Edwards' definition of moral inability—Different meanings of the terms ability, inability, &c.—In what sense, is ability commensurate with obligation?—Controversies respecting inability—*Practical* application of the doctrine of ability and inability—Natural and moral inability.

In no department of theological philosophy has the confusion of tongues been more complete, than in the use of the terms *ability* and *inability*, *can* and *can not*, *unavoidable*, &c. Throughout entire campaigns of metaphysical warfare, there has been little else than a dextrous brandishing of weapons furnished by this ambiguous phraseology. Such controversies must be interminable, unless the combatants can come to some agreement with respect to the interpretation to be given to the principal terms in the discussion.

In familiar language, and with reference to *external conduct*, the most common meaning of the terms ability, inability, &c. is very simple and distinct. A man is said to be *able* to do a thing, if he does it whenever he *wills* to do it; in other words, when there is nothing to prevent him from doing it, but a *want of inclination*. If there is something else which, in *opposition* to his will, effectually restrains him from acting in the case, he is said to be unable. But not unfrequently, in philosophical discussion, and even in common use, inability implies nothing more than strong disinclination. A miser *can not* be liberal. Joseph's brethren "could *not* speak peaceably to him." The apostle Peter speaks of men "having eyes full of adultery, and that *can not cease from sin.*" In these, and in similar instances, power is to be understood according to its *most extensive* signification, as including not only the common requisites for action, but also a *willing mind*. To distinguish the two kinds of inability, one has been called *natural*, and the other *moral*. If there is any thing besides want of inclination, which prevents a man from performing a particular act, he is said to be *naturally* unable to do it. If unwillingness is the only obstacle in the way, he is said to be *morally* unable. That which

prevents a man from doing *as he will*, is natural inability. That which prevents him from doing *as he ought*, is moral inability.

In natural inability, that which is most properly called inability, *two* elements are implied; first, some *obstacle* to the performance of that which is willed; secondly, *opposition* between the obstacle and the will. In moral inability, no such opposition can be supposed; as the obstacle in the way is unwillingness itself. There may, indeed, be opposition to this state of the will; but it does not appertain to the *inability* which there is in the case. For, by the supposition, the inability depends on the unwillingness. Any opposition to this unwillingness, therefore, is opposition to the inability, and of course, can not constitute a part of it. A son is prevented, by a perverse will, from obeying the orders of his father. There may be, at the same time, a severe struggle in his mind, between this perverseness and his apprehension of punishment, or the remonstrances of conscience, urging him to a contrary decision. But his fears of correction, or convictions of duty, are no part of the unwillingness which prevents him from obeying. They are as much opposed to his moral inability, as to his disobedient perverseness. But in the

case of *natural* inability, the opposition to the will belongs to the very obstacle which lies in the way of performing that which is willed. If a man desires to raise a weight for which his physical strength is insufficient, his inability is not in his will, but in that which is *opposed* to his will.

The distinction between natural and moral inability would be easily understood, if in its application, it were confined to external conduct. But philosophers and divines have occasion to carry back their inquiries, from outward actions, to the acts of the will itself. Here the distinction between the two kinds of inability becomes more liable to misapprehension. If a man is unable to *do* a particular act, it must be either because he is *unwilling*, which is *moral* inability; or because he *could not if he would*, which is *natural* inability. But if he is unable to *will* in a particular way, is it because he *wills* not to will so; or because he *could not* will so, if he would? The first part of the alternative implies that every volition concerning which inability is predicated, is preceded by another volition. The other part implies, that the will may be opposed to itself. What then *can* be the meaning, when it is said, that a man is unable to will as he ought. On this point, theologians are

not agreed. According to President Edwards, "Moral inability consists either in the want of inclination, or the strength of a contrary inclination; or the want of sufficient motives in view, to induce and excite the act of the will, or the strength of apparent motives to the contrary."* If *inclination* here be understood to mean volition, the former part of this definition is applicable to *external conduct.* It imports that a man is morally unable to perform that which he does not choose to do. But the latter part relates expressly to *acts of the will.* If it be an *executive* volition which the man is morally unable to put forth, it must, according to Edwards, be for want of the proper emotions or *internal* motives. If, as his language, in other places, would admit, the required act of will, which the man is morally unable to exercise, is an *emotion* or *affection,* for instance, love to God; the inability, according to the definition, must be owing to the want of *external* motives or considerations, fitted to excite the emotion, in *such a mind* as his.

Some appear to suppose, that the moral inability of *willing* right, is precisely of the same nature, as the moral inability of *doing* right, of performing a

* Freedom of Will, Part 1. Sec. 4.

required *external* action; that is, that it consists in previous *acts of choice.* All other influence, giving a wrong direction to the will, they would consider as *natural* inability. According to Edwards, moral inability consists in a want of something on which virtuous volitions depend. According to others, it consists in a want of power, in *imperative* acts of the will, to *control the affections.* Some writers define moral inability, to be that kind of inability which is consistent with *accountability,* with desert of praise or blame. This would be well enough, if we were agreed respecting the kinds of inability which are to be considered as consistent with accountability. But the definition ought not to embrace controverted points; especially when it is known, that many earnestly contend, that *all* inability is inconsistent with accountability. Even President Edwards' definition of moral inability, is not altogether free from the difficulty of involving a controverted point. It goes on the supposition, that there is a fixed connection between motives and volitions; which many deny. His definition can not be consistently adopted, by those who believe in contingent determination. According to them, the certain dependence of volition upon any thing preceding, for being as it is, would imply a *nat-*

ural inability of acting otherwise. There are other definitions of moral inability, which it is not necessary to introduce in this place.

No way has yet been devised, by which the difficulties connected with this subject may be wholly avoided. There are violent and long continued controversies, with respect to the inability of the will, among those who appear to differ very little in opinion, except as to the meaning of terms. One class use the word power, and the corresponding expressions in their greatest latitude, to include *all* the antecedents on which an act immediately depends. According to this mode of explaining the terms, a man has not power to do any thing, except what he actually does. Whatever it be, which prevents him from acting, they call it inability. But another class restrict the meaning of the word power, to those prerequisites which render a man *accountable* for not acting, or for acting wrong. If it be an *external* action which he has omitted, merely from not willing to do it; they say that he had power to do it, but would not. If he fails to exercise right *volitions*, for no other reason than a perverse disposition; they say that he has all the power of willing right which is requisite to render him accountable. There is *some-*

thing which prevents men from fully obeying the divine commands. Is it want of power, or want of inclination merely? According to some, want of inclination to obey is itself inability, because it effectually *prevents* obedience. According to others, mere want of inclination is not properly called inability. It is *no excuse* for disobedience. When it is said, that *obligation* is commensurate with *ability*, that we are not bound to do any thing which we have not power to do, the term power must evidently be taken in a *limited* sense. For if it embrace not only capacity, opportunity, &c. but *inclination;* if it comprehend *all* that on which the action depends; then the assertion amounts to this, that a man is not under obligation to do any thing, but what he actually does. If he has all the prerequisites to a particular act, it must really follow, unless its taking place or not is a matter of accident.

A large portion of the Christian church believe that no man ever did or ever will repent, without the special influence of the Divine Spirit. But *can* a man repent, has he *power* to repent, without this influence? On this point, there is a strenuous debate, among those who are agreed with respect to the *facts* in the case. Both parties believe, that a man never

will repent, without divine influence. They are agreed, that he is *inexcusable* for not repenting. But they differ widely with respect to the meaning of the terms power and ability. An effect is frequently owing to the combined influence of *several* antecedents. According to one class of writers, the word power is not properly applied to any *part* of these taken *separately*, but only to the *whole taken collectively*. According to others, *some* power belongs to each of the antecedents, though it be not, of itself, sufficient to produce the effect. If the strength of ten men be necessary to raise a given weight, a single individual can not do it; and therefore, in one sense, he has *no power* over the weight. But in another sense, he may be said to have *some* power with respect to it, as he possesses a part of the strength which is required to raise it. In the controversy respecting ability and inability, one party applies the term power exclusively to the *aggregate* of the antecedents upon which the effect depends; the other, to those which are necessary to accountability. According to the former, a man has not ability, unless he has a *willing mind*, as well as the other qualifications for doing his duty. According to the latter he has ability, if the want of a right will is all that prevents him from

obeying. One side maintains, that that which is insufficient to effect the required change, is not properly called power; that it can be nothing more than *powerless* power. The other insists, that a man is not bound to do that which he has *no* power to do. In short, one party asserts, that a man has not *full* power to repent; the other, that he has *some* power. Is there any contradiction in this? Yet the notes of alarm and discord are sounded from one end of the land to the other, because some believe that a man has *not full* power to repent, and therefore say, that he *has not* ability; while others believe, that he has *some* power to repent, and therefore say, that he *has* ability. If each side could only understand the meaning of the other, their controversy, on this point, would be at an end. But what hope is there, that they can be brought together, so long as they are resolved they *will* not understand each other? so long as each refuses to hear any explanation which is not expressed in its own peculiar dialect? The forms of expression adopted by each of the contending parties, are liable to perversion, unless very cautiously guarded against misconstruction.

There are two most momentous *practical* truths connected with the question of inability; one, that a

sinner never *will* repent, without the influence of the Spirit; the other, that he is under full *obligation* to repent, and wholly *inexcusable* for not repenting. One or the other of these truths, he who persists in disobedience will, if possible, disbelieve. He will not admit both his dependence and his guilt. If you tell him, in unqualified terms, that he *can* repent, he will draw the conclusion that he *shall;* and will remain at ease, *waiting his own time* for repentance. If you tell him, without explanation, that he *can not* repent, he will infer that he *is not under obligation* to repent of himself, and will profess to be *waiting God's time* to give him repentance. Whatever language you use, in impressing on him a sense of his obligation and guilt, you need to guard it well, lest he remain insensible of his dependence on the influence of the Spirit.

With respect to the terms *natural* and *moral* inability, though it is a matter of high moment, that the distinction be clearly drawn, between that want of power which releases from obligation, and that inability, or whatever else it may be called, which leaves the sinner without excuse; yet this distinction will not, to every mind, be definitely marked, by merely using the above phrases. Moral inability, when ap-

plied to *external conduct*, appears to be clearly enough defined, by those who are accustomed to use the expression. It signifies nothing more nor less than decided unwillingness. A man is said to be morally unable to do that which he will not do. Many consider it a great impropriety to speak of mere unwillingness as being a want of power. It is evidently a departure from the original, literal meaning of the terms. "It must be observed concerning moral inability," says President Edwards, "that the word inability is used in a sense very diverse from its original import. The word signifies only a natural inability, in the proper use of it." "A man can not be truly said to be unable to do a thing, when he can do it if he will." "No inability whatever which is merely moral, is *properly* called by the name of inability."* The common signification of inability, as has already been observed, implies *two things;* First, that there is some thing which will effectually *prevent* the action spoken of; Secondly, that this prevention is in *opposition* to the will; so that the man could not do the thing *if he would.* But what is called moral inability includes only *one* of these, that which will effectually

* Edwards on the Will, Part I. Sec. 4. and Part III. Sec. 4.

prevent the action; though this be nothing but the will itself, and therefore can not be opposed to the will. But from the strength of early association, the idea of opposition will, in many minds, be almost unavoidably connected with the use of the word inability, and the corresponding terms, can not, impossible, &c. Yet as these expressions are occasionally employed, both in the scriptures, and in familiar discourse, to signify unwillingness, we are not justified in pronouncing this *figurative* use to be wholly improper.

But the liability to misapprehension respecting the meaning of moral inability is increased, when it is contrasted, as it commonly is, with *natural* inability; apparently implying that moral inability is not natural to man; that his unwillingness to do his duty, does not proceed from any thing belonging to his *nature*. This is far from being intended, however, by those divines who most frequently make the distinction of which we are speaking. "When I use this distinction of moral and natural necessity," says President Edwards, "I would not be understood to suppose, that if any thing comes to pass by the former kind of necessity, the *nature* of things is not concerned in it, as well as in the latter."* This observation is as ap-

* Freedom of the Will, Part I. Sec. 4.

plicable to moral *inability*, as to moral necessity; for the inability to do a particular thing, is only a different expression for a necessity of *not* doing it. With some writers, the distinction between natural and moral inability appears to be this; that the former will *certainly* prevent particular actions, while the latter interposes such a difficulty merely as will *probably* prevent them. And when they hear it asserted by others, that there is no natural inability in the way of a sinner's repenting and doing his duty; they understand the meaning to be, that there is nothing, arising from his nature and the nature of things around him, which, without the renewing grace of God, will certainly prevent him from repenting and obeying.

SECTION VI.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

Consciousness of power.

Consciousness of power—In what sense are we conscious of self-determination?—Liberty of indifference—Consciousness of liberty—Accountability in relation to external conduct—to acts of the will—to emotions—and to purposes.—Is contingence essential to accountability?—Originating volition.

It is often said, that we are *conscious* of a self-determining power in the will. To enable us to judge of the correctness of this assertion, it is necessary that we understand definitely how much is meant to be implied in consciousness, and what kind of self-determining power it is, of which we are said to be conscious. Writers on mental philosophy define consciousness to be the notice which the mind takes *of its own operations*, including thoughts, volitions, emotions, &c. In what sense, then, can a man be conscious of *power?* It is not a thing which can be seen in the abstract. We can observe it only, by taking

Consciousness of power. Consciousness of self-determination.

notice of some change, and of the antecedents on which the change depends. Dr. Reid, a zealous advocate for self-determination, says, "Power is not an operation of the mind, and therefore is *no object of consciousness.* Indeed every operation of the mind is the *exertion* of some power of the mind; but we are conscious of the *operation only*, and the power lies behind the scene. And though we may justly *infer* the power from the operation, it must be remembered, that inferring is not the province of consciousness, but of reason."* We are conscious of willing to move our limbs; and we *perceive*, that they move accordingly. In this case, consciousness and perception *together* give us a knowledge of the power of our minds over the motions of our bodies. One mental act may depend on another preceding it. As both these are objects of consciousness, it may be proper to say, that we are conscious of the power of one over the other. But are we conscious that *every* act of our minds is preceded by another; that every volition is preceded by another volition?

In what sense are we conscious of a *self-determining* power? A man is conscious that he wills or

* Reid's Active Powers, Essay I. Chap. I.

determines. This implies that it is *he himself* who wills; that his volitions are his *own* acts, and not the acts of another. So far, we are conscious of self-determination. But are we conscious, that our volitions are dependent on nothing preceding? that motives from without have no influence in determining our minds to choose as they do? If there can be such influence, it cannot be an object of consciousness; except in this sense, that we may be conscious of its *effects*. For that which is without is no part of the operations of our minds. The fact, therefore, that we are not conscious of external influence, does not prove that there *is* no such influence.

Will it be said, that we *know*, that we will independently of any external influence, though it may not be proper to give to this knowledge the name of consciousness? In many instances, at least, we know the contrary. When a father rushes into a house on fire, to snatch his child from the flames, does he act independently of all influence from circumstances? Has the fire no concern in determining which way his will shall turn? If there are instances in which we are not *sensible* of any external influence upon us; is our ignorance, in the case, certain proof that no such influence can exist? If it be possible, that the mind

may, sometimes, be so nicely poised between two objects, to all appearance, perfectly alike, as to present a case of liberty of indifference or of equilibrium; what application has this to the determination of the will, by the great interests of social life, of morality, and of religion? If a man may be indifferent which of two pepper corns to take, what effect can this have upon his choice between the practice of iniquity and the service of God? Are such rare and trifling cases worthy the grave consideration of the philosopher? Are we conscious that our affections and passions, however strong they may be, have no influence upon our purposes and executive volitions? Are we conscious, that neither external circumstances, nor the habitual character of our minds, have any concern in determining the nature of our emotions? Are we conscious that motives are mere *objects* of choice, to which we are perfectly indifferent, till we have made our election? Are we conscious that we are able to prefer chains and a dungeon, in themselves considered, to liberty, and the light of heaven? Are we conscious of ever acting against all the motives which are before our minds; and that, without any inducement to such a determination?

But are we not conscious of *liberty;* of liberty *to either side;* of a power of contrary volition? We are conscious of *willing;* and, therefore, we know intuitively, that we have the *power* of willing; and this is what, by some, is called liberty. But it is certain that we are *not* conscious of liberty, in *every* sense of the word; for liberty, as defined by some writers, is directly opposed to the meaning which others attach to the term. We are not conscious, that every volition is dependent on a *preceding* volition, for being as it is; and, at the same time, that it is dependent on *nothing;* that it is, in the absolute sense, contingent. Yet each of these considerations enters into the notion of liberty as maintained by different writers. We are conscious of frequently *changing* our purposes; of willing, sometimes, to move one way, and at other times, to move in an opposite direction. But are we conscious, that these changes are made by mere contingence; that they are dependent on nothing preceding; on no condition, motive, reason, cause, or influence, for being as they are, rather than otherwise? If it be claimed, that we are conscious of having *power* to will otherwise than we do; does this power include *all* the antecedents on which volition depends? Does it imply, that we always

have equal *inclinations* in opposite directions? Are we equally inclined to preserve our lives, and to destroy them; to covet wealth, and to welcome poverty; to aspire to distinction, and to seek disgrace? Is the genuine patriot conscious of being indifferent, whether he saves his country or betrays it; or if he takes a deep interest in her welfare, is he conscious, that this has no effect whatever upon his conduct? Is the Christian conscious, that nothing but the power of contingent determination, has had any influence, in turning him from sin to holiness? It is said, that we are conscious of *originating* volition. We are, indeed, conscious, that our acts of choice proceed from ourselves. They begin with us. They are not made elsewhere, and communicated to our minds. But does this imply, that nothing antecedent has any influence, in determining of what nature they shall be?

ACCOUNTABILITY.

It is frequently asserted, that a self-determining power is essential to *accountability;* to a conviction of guilt; to a feeling of moral obligation. How can a man be justly blamed or punished, for doing that which he has no power to avoid; or for omitting that which he has no power to perform? Ought he to be

We are accountable for external conduct and acts of the will.

condemned, for doing as well as he can? No correct view can be taken on this point, without a distinct understanding of the meaning which is to be given to the expressions "no power," and "self-determining power," in this connection. There is no difficulty in knowing what is meant, when the language is applied *to external conduct.* All the world are agreed, that a man is not to blame for failing to walk, when he could not walk *if he would.* And for this plain reason, that his remaining inactive, in this case, is no indication of the state of his will. If he is afflicted with convulsions, his limbs move without his consent; the motions of his body do not obey the orders of his will. He is not responsible for them, because they are not, properly speaking, *his* motions.

But what is necessary to render a man accountable for *acts of the will itself?* They must, unquestionably, be his *own* acts, and not those of another. He must be the agent, the person who wills. In this sense, his volitions are self-determined. And if he actually wills, he certainly has power to will. But must he not also have power to *will the contrary?* Now what can this inquiry mean? Power over an action implies some antecedent or antecedents, on which the action depends. Volitions, if they depend

upon any thing besides the agent himself, must depend on his feelings, his affections, his dispositions, his apprehensions. When it is affirmed, that an accountable agent must have power to will in opposite directions; are we to understand the meaning to be, that he has *equal* power to either side; or only that he has *some* power to the contrary? If the latter only be intended there is no difficulty in seeing, that the *balance* of feeling may be so decisively on one side, as to control the man's volitions. Is it necessary to accountable agency, that the feelings for and against the decisions of the will, should be *equal?* Is the murderer free from guilt, unless he has as strong an inclination to spare his victim, as to take his life? Is the sinner excusable for his impenitence, unless he has an equal disposition to obey God, and to disobey him? Are the angels in heaven deserving of no praise for their constancy, unless they have an equal propensity to revolt? Is Washington entitled to no credit, for giving freedom to his country, unless it can be proved, that he was equally inclined to betray it? Will it be said, that although our feelings may be all on one side, or much stronger on one side, than on the other, yet that this does not determine what our volitions will be? How then, from a man's conduct,

can any opinion be formed of his feelings? How does it appear, that Judas had not as sincere an attachment to his master, as Peter or John? Why may we not ascribe his treachery to a power of willing and acting contrary to his disposition?

Will it be said, that the liberty to either side, lies in the *affections themselves?* Is it true, that a man's affections depend on nothing preceding, for being as they are; that it is a matter of perfect accident, whether he loves or hates, rejoices or mourns; and that, so far as his feelings are owing to any influence from within or without, he is not accountable for them? Or will it be said, that he can control his affections by his *resolutions* or commanding purposes; and that this is what renders him accountable? But are resolutions formed without any inducement; without any consideration which has an influence in determining what they shall be?

Must we, then, come to the conclusion, that we are not accountable for our imperative volitions, or our purposes, or our affections, or the state of our hearts, unless they are entirely *fortuitous;* entirely independent of every thing preceding. If contingence is essential to accountability; then, so far as any thing

has an influence in determining the acts or states of our minds, so far it goes to destroy their moral quality.

A man is not considered accountable for *external* actions, unless they *depend* on his will. Why should an *opposite* principle be applied to his volitions? Why should it be deemed essential to his responsibility, that they should be *in*dependent of every thing preceding, for being as they are? Is it said, that they are dependent on the *man himself;* that he is accountable, because it is *he* that determines of what character his acts shall be? But does this imply, that he wills without any regard to the good or evil in the objects offered to his choice? Have worldly gratifications no influence on the decision of one who resolves to devote himself to the pursuit of them? Have the character of God, the evil of sin, and the interests of eternity, no concern in determining the course of the Christian? If it be true, that our acts of will are put forth, by perfect accident; that for being as they are, rather than the contrary, they have no dependence on the state of the heart, or motives, or the reasons, causes, and conditions of volition, or on any thing whatever; is this the only consideration which renders us accountable for them? Is absolute contingence the sole ground of responsibility; of our

Originating volitions.

deserving praise or blame, reward or punishment? It is sometimes said that a man is not accountable for acts which he does not himself *originate*. Every man does originate all his volitions, in this sense, that they are *his* acts, and not the acts of another, that they begin with him, that they do not exist before he puts them forth. But does this imply, that nothing can have any influence to induce him to originate them?

SECTION VII.

COMMON SENSE.

Customary use.	Philosophical use.

Customary use of the phrase—Philosophical use—Intuitive truths—Application of common sense to philosophical speculations—Remarks of President Edwards—Decisions of common sense respecting volition, the influence of motives, and accountable agency.

An appeal to *common sense*, in behalf of a self-determining power of the will, is not unfrequently made. This phrase, in customary use, has a meaning sufficiently well settled. It signifies the practical judgment exercised by the mass of the community, especially by men of plain education, on subjects with which they are familiar, in the common business and intercourse of life. It is the sense of common men, about common things. But in philosophical speculations, the phrase is not entirely free from ambiguity. Some writers appear to use it, as nearly or exactly synonymous with *intuition;* the power of

the mind to decide immediately respecting self-evident truths; a faculty which is common to all mankind, the learned and the unlearned. In public discussions, propositions ought not to be ranked with intuitive truths, unless, like mathematical axioms, they are *universally* admitted. That which is self-evident to one man, may not always be so to another. But for the purposes of controversial argument, some common ground must be agreed upon. Nothing should be taken for granted on one side, which is not admitted by the other. To assume a point as self-evident, is to come to a conclusion previous to discussion.

But it is presumed, that when an appeal is made to common sense, in behalf of self-determination, it is intended that the phrase should be understood according to its usual acceptation, as expressing the decision of the great body of plain, practical men. This is a tribunal very competent to judge, in cases with which it is familiar. But on points of intricate philosophical speculation, it is no easy matter to bring a statement before men not versed in metaphysical phraseology, in such a shape as to be effectually guarded against misapprehension. The common people know what *liberty* means, as they are accus-

tomed to use the word. But they are not informed of all the strange significations which are given to the term, in metaphysical speculation. According to them, a man is in the enjoyment of liberty, when he does as he will. Now if you present a case for their decision, in which the term is intended to have a very different meaning, their verdict may be correct, according to their own understanding of its import; while it has, in truth, no application to the case actually proposed. "There is a grand illusion," says Edwards, "in the pretended demonstration of Arminians from *common sense*. The main strength of all these demonstrations, lies in that prejudice that arises, through the insensible change of the use and meaning of such terms as *liberty*, *able*, *unable*, *necessary*, *impossible*, *unavoidable*, *invincible*, *action*, &c. from their original and vulgar sense, to a *metaphysical* sense entirely diverse."*

Common sense decides, that a man is free, when he does as he will; that is, when his actions are obedient to his volitions. But has common sense taken up this question for adjudication, whether we *will* as we will; whether every volition is preceded by ano-

* Freedom of the Will, Part IV. Sec. 4.

ther, on which it depends? Common sense considers a man accountable for what he does willingly, when he is in possession of his reason. But does it find it necessary, before awarding praise or blame, to inquire whether the will always follows the last dictate of the understanding; whether, immediately before acting freely, it must be in a state of equilibrium; whether every volition is preceded by an infinite series of volitions? Does a jury ever undertake to settle these points, before pronouncing on the innocence or guilt of the accused? Would the court allow arguments of this nature to be addressed to them by the counsel? Is it said, that the common people *take these things for granted*, as self-evident, and essential to freedom? How can they take that for granted, which they do not even *think of*, unless some speculating philosopher has made efforts, commonly unavailing, to introduce into their minds some of his finely wrought theories? "The common people," says Edwards, "don't ascend up, in their reflections and abstractions, to the metaphysical sources, relations, and dependences of things, in order to form their notion of faultiness or blame-worthiness. They don't wait till they have decided, by their refinings, what first determines the will; whether it

be determined by something extrinsic or intrinsic; whether volition determines volition, or whether the understanding determines the will; whether there be any such thing as metaphysicians mean by contingence, (if they have any meaning;) whether there be a sort of a strange unaccountable sovereignty in the will, in the exercise of which, by its own sovereign acts, it brings to pass all its own sovereign acts. They don't take any part of their notion of fault or blame, from the resolution of any such questions. If this were the case, there are multitudes, yea, the far greater part of mankind, nine hundred and ninety nine out of a thousand, that would live and die, without having any such notion as that of fault ever entering into their heads."*

Common sense teaches, that motives do not choose and act of themselves, without an agent; that they do not lie, or swear, or steal. But is it a doctrine of common sense, that the agent acts *without* motives; or that motives are merely *objects*, upon which volition, put forth fortuitously, may fasten; that they have no influence whatever upon his decision; that the sparkling bowl offers no allurement to the volup-

* Freedom of the Will, Part IV. Sec. 4.

tuary; that to the thief, a purse of guineas presents no temptation to steal; that external objects have no effect in moving the passions; or that the passions, when excited, have no tendency to give a direction to the will? Is it a dictate of common sense, that acts of the will are entirely *accidental;* that they are affected by nothing preceding, either appetites, or emotions, or perceptions, or suggestions of imagination? Common sense decides, that it is the *mind itself* which determines; that is, which wills. But does this imply, that it always determines, by a *preceding* determination; that whenever it chooses, it *chooses to choose* as it does; that its choice is not influenced by any thing either agreeable or disagreeable, in the objects presented to its view, or in any of their relations?

According to common sense, a man is not accountable, for failing to do that which he has *no power* to do. But suppose that some philosophers think proper to include, under the term power, not only bodily strength, and understanding, and opportunity, but *willingness* also; not only natural, but moral ability; in short, every thing on which the doing, and the willing to do, depends; does common sense determine, that a man is not accountable, unless he has

all this power; or in other words, that he is not accountable, for failing to do any thing which he does not actually do? According to common sense, a man is not to blame for an action, when he has *no* power to the contrary; when the action would be the same, whatever his will concerning it might be. But does this imply, that he is not to blame for doing a thing, unless his will is *equally balanced* between doing and not doing it; or that he is not to blame for any act of his will, unless he is *equally inclined* to will the contrary; or that he is not to blame for the indulgence of any malignant passion, unless his disposition has an *equal tendency* to lead him to the exercise of the opposite benevolent affection?

The judgment of common sense, respecting the efficacy of motives, is manifest in all the intercourse of life. Every instance in which one man endeavors to have an influence over the voluntary conduct of another, is an example of the universal conviction, that motives have more or less power over the will. What are persuasions, but means of giving direction to the volitions of others? They may not always be effectual, as they are liable to be overbalanced by opposing influence. But if they have any adaptation to the purpose for which they are used, they have a *ten-*

dency to determine the acts of the will. With what view does a statesman address a popular assembly, if not to bring them to a decision, in conformity with his wishes? Why does the faithful minister of Christ, urge upon his hearers repentance and obedience, if he believes that their volitions are entirely contingent? What is civil government, but a system of measures designed to regulate the conduct of men, by giving direction to their wills? Of what avail are rewards and punishments, promises and threatenings, if human volitions are determined wholly by chance? For what purpose is temptation to be avoided, if it has no influence in giving a wrong direction to the will? We do not expect, indeed, that the same means will have the same effect upon *all minds;* for the power of a motive depends on the relation which it bears to the feelings of him to whom it is presented. It is by adapting our arguments and persuasions to the character of the persons addressed, that we hope to render our efforts successful. The way in which we endeavor to control *our own* future volitions, is by placing ourselves in such circumstances, and bringing into view such considerations, as will tend to incline our wills, in the direction which we wish.

SECTION VIII.

MECHANICAL AND PHYSICAL AGENCY.

Is the will a machine?

Is the will a mere machine?—Does it *resemble* a machine?—Several significations of the term physical—Is the will subject to physical *laws*?—or to the laws of cause and effect?—Motives are not the *sole* cause of volition—Is the *certain* connection between cause and effect to be considered as physical causation?—What is meant by *moral* certainty?—Certainty of *knowledge*—President Edwards' opinion—Dr. Edwards on moral certainty—Physical necessity.

We sometimes hear it said, that if the will is directed by motives, if it is not a self-moving power, it is a *mere machine*. It is easy to use words without meaning. What is a machine? It is commonly understood to be an instrument composed entirely of *matter*, having certain *movements*, and set in operation by a *material force*. Has the will or its acts any of these properties? Is it a material substance? Has it any bodily motions? Is it impelled by a mechanical force? Does a machine, like the mind in wil-

ling, act from choice? Is it under the influence of rational motives? Is it moved by persuasion, by argument, by commands, by the hope of reward, or fear of punishment? Nothing of all this. But if the mind, in its volitions, is not self-moved, it *resembles* a machine, in this respect, that its acts have a *dependence* upon something preceding. So does the mind resemble a machine in this, that both have a *real existence.* Is it, therefore, a mere machine? Both have *begun* to exist. Does this prove the mind to be a machine? Both have been *created.* Both are subject to *change.* Is the mind, therefore, nothing more nor less than a machine? The human understanding is unavoidably affected, by the objects in the world around it. Is it, for this reason, a mere machine? Is every thing which is *like* another in *any* respect, to be called by the same name? Is man an elephant, because both have the faculties of hearing and seeing? Is the human mind a watch, or a clock, because its volitions *succeed* each other, like the beats of a time piece?

PHYSICAL AGENCY.

Nearly allied to the objection which represents dependent volition as being mechanical, is another,

which considers such volition as being *physical* agency, rather than moral. The multifarious meanings of the term physical, renders it difficult to determine what is intended by this objection. It is one of those pliable words, which may be made to mean one thing or another, any thing or nothing, as occasion may require. Its proper signification is, *according to nature.* Is it claimed, that nothing can be moral agency, but that which is *contrary* to nature, or which has *no connection* with nature?

Physical is sometimes used in reference to the *substance* of the mind, in distinction from its acts. By the expression *physical depravity*, is often meant a corruption of the very essence of the soul, as distinguished from its exercises. But does the dependence of volition upon the mind, render it a part of the substance of the mind? Does its being influenced by external objects, make it to be of the same nature with those objects? Can acts of the will be a substance of any kind? Or is this the meaning of the objector, that volitions must be physical and not moral, if they *depend* on the mind; or upon any other substance? Are thought and memory, hope and fear, love and hatred physical, because they depend on the mind, and the objects which are brought

before it? If the mind is the cause of its own acts, do they not proceed from a substance? Is it to be taken for granted, that nothing which depends on any thing else, can be of a moral nature?

Is the purport of the objection this, that acts of the will are not subject to the *laws* of nature? This is very true, if by physical laws be meant those ordinances of heaven by which the motions and positions of *material* objects are regulated, such as the attraction of gravitation, chemical affinity, electrical repulsion, mechanical equilibrium, the quantity and direction of impelling forces. Though matter may have an *influence* on the mind, it is not, so far as we know, in the way in which one body acts on another. The gold of the miser does not determine the acts of his will, by the same kind of force, as that by which it turns the beam of the jeweller's balance. The love of glory which inspires the warrior, does not move him on to battle, with an impulse of the same nature, as that with which the cannon shot strikes its object. The passion and rage which burst forth in deeds of violence, do not operate in precisely the same manner, as the explosive force of gunpowder. But from the fact, that matter has its laws, are we justified in drawing the conclusion, that the will can be subject

to *no laws* whatever; or if it have laws of its own, that there can be *no* point of *resemblance* between these and the laws of matter? A law is commonly understood to be a rule, by which something is regulated. But, to avoid admitting any resemblance between the laws of matter and those of the will, must we affirm, that the latter are rules by which *nothing* is regulated; that they are only the ordinances of absolute and blind contingence? To what extent, are we to carry this denial of any resemblance between the properties and relations of matter, and the prerogatives of the will. Matter *exists;* is the will, therefore, a nonentity? Matter has *begun* to exist; are we, therefore, to conclude, that the human will, if it exist at all, has existed from eternity? The properties of matter have been *given* it by the Creator; are the attributes of the will, therefore, self-existent? Matter *continues* from one day to another; is it denied, that this is the case with the will? The motions of a body are successive; does it follow, that there is *no* succession in our volitions; that they all take place at the same instant?

Perhaps it may be thought, that the objection which we are considering, is principally directed against the law of *causation.* Because material phenomena have

their causes, does it follow, that volition has *no* cause? If so, how can the mind be the cause of its own acts of will? The evidence that human volitions depend on something preceding, is not obtained, by reasoning analogically from the axiom, that every change in the *natural* world must have a cause. But does the fact, that changes in the world of matter *must* have a cause, prove that acts of the will *can not* have a cause? It must not, you say, be a cause of the *same kind.* There must be no *physical* causation, in the case of volition. Who supposes that there is? Who believes that any influence acts upon the will, in the same way in which the wind moves a ship, or a stream of water turns the wheel of a mill? But is there *any* relation of cause and effect, between external motives and volitions? Not in the sense of being the *sole* cause. Acts of choice are not produced by motives, without a mind, any more than by the mind, without motives. A motive does not examine, compare, and choose. But do volitions come forth fortuitously, without being affected by any influence whatever? Do they *depend* on nothing preceding, for being as they are, rather than otherwise? Does it make no difference what motives are before the mind, when it is about to will? The result of the same external

influence, operating upon *different* minds, may undoubtedly be very different. But does this prove, that the difference in the volitions, is not owing to a difference in any of the antecedents? While every material phenomenon has its cause, is *chance* the supreme law of the moral world? Is every thing physical, which is not, in the absolute sense, contingent?

Is it the *certain* connection between cause and effect, which is considered as inadmissible in the case of volition? Is it this that is called *physical* causation? And is it true, that certainty belongs only to the relations of the *material* world? Or if it extend to mental phenomena, is it confined to the understanding, without having any application to the will? Is uncertainty the universal law of accountable agency? Is there no certainty that fallen men will continue in sin, till they are renewed by the spirit of God? Is there no ground of assurance, that in the days of the millennium, the hearts of the children of men will be turned to the Lord? Will there not be causes in operation, of sufficient efficacy to *secure* this result? Is there no certainty, that the saints in heaven will continue steadfast in holiness? Is there nothing more than a strong probability? Even this

would imply the general prevalence of motives favorable to obedience, over influence of a contrary tendency. For probability, as well as certainty, has its laws, though absolute contingence has none. It may be said, perhaps, that there is a *moral* certainty in the case, but not a *physical* certainty. This is granting all that is asked, if by moral certainty be meant *real* certainty; a *sure* connection between moral acts and the antecedents on which they depend. But even so definite and simple a term as certainty, when subjected to metaphysical treatment, is not without ambiguity; especially when connected with the term moral. What is frequently meant by the expression moral certainty, is no certainty at all; but merely a strong probability. It is often used to distinguish that which is, in some degree, doubtful, from that which is unquestionably true.

There is another point of view, in which the term certainty is ambiguous. There is certainty of *knowledge*, and also a certainty in the nature and relations of *things*, which is the foundation of certain knowledge. That a sphere is two thirds of its circumscribing cylinder, was a certain truth, long before it was discovered by Archimedes. Certain knowledge of any truth implies, that it *is* a certain truth. It is certainly

known, *because* it is certainly true. Some metaphysicians maintain, that volitions which are neither certain in themselves, nor certainly dependent on any thing preceding, but wholly contingent, may, nevertheless, be certainly foreknown. President Edwards was of a different opinion. "Metaphysical or philosophical necessity," he observes, "is nothing different from their certainty." But to prevent misapprehension, he adds, "I speak not now of the certainty of *knowledge*, but the certainty that is in *things themselves*, which is the *foundation* of the certainty of the knowledge of them." "There must be a certainty in things themselves, *before* they are certainly known." "For certainty of knowledge is nothing else but knowing or discerning the certainty there is in the things themselves which are known."* He is so far from admitting, that that which is uncertain in itself, can be certainly foreknown, even by the Divine Mind, that he has entered into an extended argument to prove, that no future event can be certainly foreknown, whose existence is contingent."†

* Freedom of Will, Part I. Sec. 3. and Part II. Sec. 12.
† Freedom of Will, Part II. Sec. 12.

The younger Edwards also, though he frequently asserts, that by moral necessity, he means nothing different from the certainty of moral actions; yet shews abundantly, that by certainty, as used in this explanation, he intends not merely certainty of knowledge, but a certainty in things themselves, and in their relations. "All moral actions," he observes, "are foreknown by God, *in consequence* of an antecedent moral necessity." "As God sees all things as they are, therefore when he sees them to be certainly future, they *are* certainly future; and this certain futurity, which is the *object* of the divine knowledge, existed, in the order of nature, antecedently to the divine knowledge."* The certainty which he calls moral certainty is, according to him, "the real and certain *connection* between some moral action and its cause;" not the certain foreknowledge of an action which is, in the absolute sense, contingent. It is *objective*, and not merely *subjective* certainty. "No doubt knowledge in the Deity, is the same thing with *subjective* certainty, or certain knowledge; but it is not the same with *objective* certainty, or the truth which is the object of the divine knowledge.†

* Essays on Liberty and Necessity, p. 145, 149. † Page 151.

Physical necessity.

The term *physical*, even when taken by itself, is a word of very vague signification. But when it is combined with another ambiguous term, it forms a compound the meaning of which is still more multifarious. The expression *physical necessity*, for instance, composed of two words each of which has half a dozen different meanings, is sufficiently indefinite to answer the purposes of the most evasive metaphysician. Or if he ever has occasion for phraseology still more ambiguous, he has only to call to his aid a few more similar expressions, such as necessary cause, physical efficiency, fatal necessity, originating volition, efficient cause, irresistible influence, &c. taking care not to annex to them any definite signification. The whole subject of the freedom of the will, may easily be thrown into utter confusion, by a liberal use of a few ambiguous words and phrases.

SECTION IX.

MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

Influence of the divine government.

Has the government of God any *influence* upon the human will? —Has his *providence* any concern in giving direction to volition?—Influence of commands and threatenings, rewards and punishments—Does God merely accommodate his administration to what he *foresees* will be the conduct of his creatures? —Have the word and Spirit of God any efficacious influence upon the will?—Is God the author of sin?—Why has he not prevented all sin?—Could he not do this, without destroying moral agency?—Is sin the necessary means of the greatest good?—Can God promote the highest good of the universe *without means?*—Are there any limits to the power of God? —Is it certain that the highest *supposable* good of the universe is actually attainable?—Happiness of God—Three different theories to account for the origin of evil.

THE deep interest which belongs to the subject of contingent self-determination, lies in its relation to the *moral government* of God. This, in the more enlarged acceptation of the term, is commonly understood to mean that system of dispensations, by which he

not only distributes rewards and punishments to the righteous and the wicked; but exerts an *efficacious influence* in favor of holiness, and in opposition to iniquity. It implies that, in some way or other, he has the power of giving a direction to the volitions of his creatures; of securing some in a course of uniform obedience, and recovering others from the dominion of sin. The great question before us is, whether he has, in fact, any such determining influence; or whether he merely arranges his system of providential and retributive dispensations, in such a manner, as to adapt them to what he foresees may *happen* to be the results of man's voluntary agency. The very definition of absolute contingence implies that it is inconsistent with any control or direction, from any cause whatever. If the nature of moral agency requires, that whenever two objects of choice are before the mind, the tendency in the will to choose the one, should be exactly balanced by its tendency to choose the other; and if any influence which interposes to disturb this equilibrium, interferes with the freedom of the will; then how is it possible, that even divine power should give a direction to the acts of choice, without interfering with the accountability of the agent? The impossibility in the case, according

to the supposition, is not owing to any *limitation of power*, but to an incompatibility in the *nature of things*. It is immaterial what is the *kind* or *degree* of the determining influence, if *all* such influence is inconsistent with voluntary agency.

If contingency is an essential attribute of volition, then God can not *create* moral agents with such a nature, such capacities, and such propensities, as will secure their continuance in holiness. To say that a man's volitions are contingent, in the absolute sense, and yet that they are invariably holy, is a manifest contradiction. There is no uniformity in the results of contingence. If a man's volitions are rendered holy, by the very nature which his Creator has given him, they are not left to the determination of chance. Nor can acts of the will, if they are contingent, be controlled by the *providence* of God. He may bring *objects* of choice before the mind, and thus give it an *opportunity* to make an election. But so far as these objects have any determining influence on the will, they must affect its decision, in a way inconsistent with contingence.

The same observation may be applied to what is more appropriately called the moral government of God; his commands and prohibitions, his promises

and threatenings, his rewards and punishments. To what purpose are all the precepts and sanctions of his law, the pressing invitations of his gospel, the representations of heavenly glory, and the terrors of the world of perdition; if they have no power to influence the decisions of the will, without destroying moral agency; if their efficacy is inconsistent with that contingence which is supposed to be essential to the freedom of the will?

How can the doctrine, that volition is independent of all directing power of motives, be reconciled with what is commonly understood to be the benevolent *design* of the divine administration, the increase and continuance of holiness and consequent happiness? Has the *law* of God, with its penalty, its promises, and its threatenings, no tendency to promote obedience, and deter from transgression? From the exhibitions of mercy in the gospel, from the sufferings and death of the Savior, from his compassionate calls to those who are ready to perish, from the offers of a free and everlasting salvation, does there come no influence which can reach the heart, to bring forth holy affections, and purposes and works? If both the law and the gospel are really efficacious, in restraining iniquity and promoting holiness, is this at the ex-

pense of the free agency of man? What purpose is to be answered, by the manifestations of majesty, and justice, and grace, in the retributions of the *judgment day;* if they are to have no effect to bind the heavenly hosts in firmer bonds of love and gratitude, and allegiance to their Maker? Of what avail are all the terrors of the eternal prison, if they have no tendency to deter others from disobedience and revolt. Would a God of infinite compassion inflict punishment on his creatures, even when it is deserved, if it could have no effect in maintaining the authority of his law, and securing the holiness and happiness of his kingdom? If acts of the will are altogether contingent, can he *have* any moral government, any course of dispensations which will have a determining influence over the volitions of his creatures?

It may be thought, perhaps, that although the nature of our minds, constitutional propensities, acquired habits, circumstances, and motives, are not the *causes* of volition, and do not determine of what character they shall be; yet the omniscient Ruler of the universe, having a perfect comprehension of all the possible antecedents of volition, can select and introduce, into his providential arrangements, those which he *foresees* will be followed by certain acts of the will.

To this it may be answered, that if these volitions are not *dependent* on the supposed antecedents, then no change in the antecedents would make any difference in the volitions; and therefore no influence would be exercised over the volitions, by any regulation of the antecedents. But if the volitions *are* dependent, they are not, in the absolute sense, contingent. Their character is determined by something preceding.

If man is no longer a free agent, when the acts of his will are subject to any determining influence; then the *Spirit of God* can not transform the heart, and turn it to the exercise of holiness. Whether he operates on the mind directly, or through the instrumentality of motives; in either case, if a change of the will is effected, by his agency, there is no room left for the determining power of contingence. But if this has absolute control, neither the providence of God, nor his government and laws; neither the mercy of the gospel, nor the terrors of his throne of judgment; neither his word nor his Spirit; nor all these together, can have efficacy sufficient to secure the decisions of the will. No accumulation of power comes any nearer towards gaining the point. The greater the controlling influence, the greater the interference with the determinations of contingence.

The power of God over acts of the will.

But if the volitions of accountable agents are dependent, for their nature, on any thing preceding; if contingence does not come in, to break the chain of connection; then the Creator may have a determining influence over the volitions themselves, by the power which he possesses over the causes, conditions, occasions, and other antecedents on which choice depends. If the *natural constitution* of the agent has any concern in deciding the character of his volitions, this constitution is moulded by the hand of God. If *external motives* have any sway over the will, these are presented under a superintending providence. If *internal perceptions and emotions* have any influence on volition, these are dependent on other antecedents which are under the regulation of divine power. By either leaving his creatures to themselves, to yield to their own propensities, and the various influences with which, in the natural course of events, they are surrounded; or by the special interposition of his providence, whenever he sees fit, and by the agency of his Spirit; he can exercise a controlling power over the acts of the will. This he can do, if such a superintendence is not inconsistent with the nature of moral agency. The inquiry, then, concerning contingent self-determina-

tion, involves no less a question than this; *Whether God can exercise any determining influence over the moral actions of his creatures.* Are we prepared to decide this momentous question in the negative? While the worlds and systems of worlds in the *material* universe, are under the perfect control of their Maker, is the *moral* world unavoidably left to the dominion of chance?

It may be thought, perhaps, that although God can not control the free acts of his creatures, yet he may administer a moral government, by rendering to them righteous retribution; by rewarding or punishing them, according to their deserts. But if motives have no tendency to affect the decisions of the will, all this array of precepts and penalties, of promises and threatenings, of representations of heavenly glory, and the hopeless doom of the finally impenitent, is devoid of all efficacy, for the promotion of holiness, and the prevention of iniquity. It has no influence which can reach the empire of contingence.

AUTHOR OF SIN.

To the supposition, that human volitions are dependent on something preceding, for being as they are, it may be objected, that this *makes God the author of sin.*

Is God the author of sin?

What is it to be the author of sin? According to the proper use of language, it is to *commit* sin. To be the author of sinful actions, is to do that which is sinful. To be the author of sinful volitions, is to put forth such volitions. The author of sin is the *agent* who wills and does the evil. To avoid bringing upon God the imputation of being the author of sin, is it necessary to consider all sinful volitions as contingent; having no dependence on any thing preceding, for being what they are? If it be said, that they are dependent upon nothing but the nature of the agent; will it also be said, that this nature has been derived from nothing preceding, that it has come into existence by accident. If sin must not be dependent on any thing which is dependent on God, then he can do nothing in his providence, which may be even the *occasion* of sin. For occasions are among the antecedents on which volition depends. Is it making God the author of sin, to ascribe to him the creation of the agent who sins? Will any one charge upon God the sin which his creatures commit? He is the author of their being. He may be the author of the circumstances in which they are placed. But does this make him the author of their sin? If it does, how is the difficulty removed, by considering voli-

tions as altogether contingent; by representing it to be the very nature of a moral agent, to be liable to sin by accident? Who gave to man this nature, from which contingent volitions proceed? Did not the author of our being *foresee* that, with such a nature as he gave us, and in such a world as that in which he placed us, we should not only be liable to sin, but should actually sin? If the millions of millions of volitions which are put forth every moment, are all perfectly contingent; that is, if there is an even chance, with respect to each one, whether it will be sinful or holy, it is certain that *some* of them will be sinful. Is the author of our moral nature to be considered the author of these? Is our Creator the author of all the acts of his creatures? Is he to be considered the author of sin, if he gives being to that which *causes* sin? Nothing is more directly the cause of sin, than the sinner himself. Yet he is a creature of God. Is God to be considered the author of sin, if he has either created *such agents* as would be liable to sin, or brought before his creatures *such objects* as might influence them to sin? Is he the author of sin, if he creates a being who will *certainly* sin? In our fallen world, it is certain that every rational creature of God will sin.

PREVENTION OF SIN.

If the volitions of moral agents are under the control of the Creator, the inquiry may be made, why has he not wholly *prevented* the existence of sin? Perfect goodness must be displeased with all iniquity. If human volitions are always dependent on some antecedent or antecedents; if these are connected with something preceding; if the links in the chain of dependence are uninterrupted, till they terminate in the self-existent cause of all things; does not he hold the whole succession of intermediate causes, of circumstances, and agents, and conditions, and occasions, and motives, and volitions, entirely at his disposal? Why then does he suffer that which he abhors to take place? Does not the existence of sin imply a *limit*, either to his *power*, or to his *goodness*?

This difficulty does not press exclusively upon the opinion, that volitions are dependent upon something preceding, for being what they are. Let it be supposed, that they are contingent. It is generally admitted, by those who believe that this is the case, that they are *foreseen* by God. Why then does he give existence to beings who he knows will sin; and that many of them will so sin, that it would have

"been good for them, if they had never been born?" Will it be said, that he could not avoid bringing them into being, *consistently with the best good of the universe?* And how do we know, even supposing that the volitions of his creatures are under his control, that he could interpose to prevent all sin, *in a way* consistent with the best good of the universe? Do you say, that if he could not, it must be because he could not prevent all sin *without destroying moral agency?* Is the destroying of moral agency the *only* evil which could possibly result from deranging the plans of infinite wisdom and benevolence? If it be admitted, that all sin can not be prevented, in the *best* moral system; does it follow, that it could not be prevented in *any* moral system?

Will it be said, that if we do not adopt the opinion, that sin is suffered to take place to avoid destroying moral agency, we must be driven to the position, that *sin itself is the necessary means of the greatest good?* Can no intermediate supposition be made? Do these two theories stand in such relation to each other, that either one or the other must certainly be true? God has arranged a vast and complicated system of means, for advancing the interests of his kingdom. May it not be true, that the measures necessary to prevent

all sin, would involve such a change in this system of means, as would *impair the happiness* of the universe? This supposition does not necessarily imply, that *sin itself* is one of the means of the greatest good. It only implies, that greater good will follow from the *permission** of sin, than could result from such a change of measures in the moral system, as would be necessary in order to prevent all sin. The means which God employs, for enlarging the happiness of his kingdom, may be so perverted by his creatures, as to become the occasion of sin. The exalted natures of the angels, and their capacity for high enjoyment, may have been, to some of them, a temptation to rebellion. The bounties of providence, which in rich abundance are spread before us for our good, are our principal temptations to sinful indulgence. The plan which infinite benevolence has devised, for the salvation of our race is, by multitudes, perverted to licentiousness. The long continued forbearance of God towards sinful men, to give them an opportunity of securing eternal life, is often so abused, as

* Permission of sin may signify either not *forbidding* or not *preventing* sin. It is scarcely necessary to state, that the expression is to be understood in the latter sense only, in this discussion.

greatly to aggravate their guilt. The measures of the divine providence and government are not *all* employed in *preventing evil.* Some must be directed to the attainment of *positive good;* and these may indirectly be the occasion of sin.

The doctrine, that God can control, at pleasure, the volitions of his creatures, does not necessarily imply, that he can do this *without means.* Do you say, that omnipotence can accomplish every thing, by *any* means, or even with *no* means? Then surely *sin* is not the *necessary* means of the greatest good; he can effect his beneficent purposes without its aid. Is it urged, that to consider means necessary in the government of God, *is limiting his power?* And is it not limiting his power, to affirm that he *can not* promote the highest good, except by *means of sin?* If he can accomplish all his purposes *as well* without means as with them, why does he ever make use of means?

Do we always understand ourselves, when we speak of limitations to the power of God? May it not sometimes be the case, that what we call a limit of power, is really an inconsistency in the nature and relations of things? It is not owing to defect of power, that the diameter of a circle can not be made

equal to its circumference; that a straight line can not be made to coincide in all its parts, with a curve; or that a world can not be made perfectly happy, while perfectly sinful. In the nature and relations of things supposed to exist, there may be inconsistencies not observed by us. An uneducated man does not see the absurdity of affirming, that the three angles of a plane triangle may be greater than two right angles. "With God, all things are possible." But the suggestions of metaphysical philosophy are not always *things*. Frequently, they are neither realities nor possibilities. A God of infinite power and benevolence will undoubtedly secure the highest *attainable* good of the created universe. But every created thing is finite. Does it imply any deficiency either of power or of goodness in God, that he does not confer *infinite* happiness on his creation? We may *suppose* all the holy and happy beings in the universe to be as holy and happy as they now are, or as they ever will be; and *in addition to this*, that all who are now sinful and miserable, should be entirely holy and happy. Would not this, to our fallible apprehensions, be a more perfect universe than the present? Or if we assume, with the Universalist, that all *will be* holy and happy hereafter; we may

suppose, that they *might have been* as holy and happy, *from the beginning*. We may suppose, that all these might have commenced their existence, ages of ages before they did. We may still go on with our suppositions, till we imagine an infinite number of created beings, all infinitely great, and infinitely happy, and existing from eternity. Is there no impossibility or absurdity in this? Yet any thing short of this, implies a limitation somewhere; not a limitation of *the power of God*, but of the powers and capacities of *things*. There is no avoiding this conclusion, but by denying that there ever has been, or ever will be, either sin or misery, in this or any other world. By admitting such a limitation, are we guilty of ascribing a *defect* to the power or goodness of God? May it not be inconsistent with the nature of things, that all sin should be prevented, in a universe filled with intelligent beings, possessing such natures, capacities, and propensities, placed in such circumstances, and with such motives before them, as are best calculated for attaining the highest good?

For aught that we can tell, it may be necessary, in carrying into execution the purposes of infinite benevolence, not only that means should be used, but that there should be a *choice* of means; a selection of those which are better adapted than others to

Means of the greatest good. Happiness of God.

the great end proposed. And this system of means may be inconsistent with such a course of measures as would prevent the existence of all sin. This supposition does not imply, that *sin itself* is one of the necessary means by which the greatest good is attained; but only that it could not be wholly prevented, except in such a way as would derange and impair the best possible system of means. According to this view, sin is neither good in itself, nor in its tendency. Though wholly evil, infinite wisdom suffers it to take place, rather than relinquish the course of measures which are necessary to the best good of the universe. These may have been adopted, not *for the sake* of the sin which follows, but *notwithstanding* the sin, for the sake of the good, which they are calculated to produce, and which greatly overbalances the evil of the sin and its consequences.

Will it be said, that God must be rendered *unhappy*, if sin and misery result from the measures which are necessary to secure the highest good of the universe? Why then must he not be unhappy, if it is out of his power to secure this highest good, except *by means of* the sin which he abhors? On either supposition, the actual amount of sin and misery is the same; and is equally displeasing to a being of

infinite holiness and benevolence. Is it said, that he would be *more* happy, if the immense good of his kingdom could be attained, without involving the sin and suffering of any of his creatures? Why then would he not be more happy, if this immense good could be attained in some other way than *by means of sin;* so that all those who, upon the present system, are or will be perfectly holy and happy, would be equally so, without sin in others; and *in addition* to this, that those who are now lost would also be perfectly holy and happy? Has not God abundant reason to rejoice in his works if the good in the creation immeasurably over-balances the evil?

The three suppositions which have been mentioned here, respecting the origin of evil, are these:

1. That sin is the necessary *means* of the greatest good.

2. That sin is the natural *consequence* of a *moral system;* of *any* system of voluntary agents.

3. That sin is the certain consequence of the *best* moral system; the system of divine administration which will result in the highest good of the universe.

It does not come within the design of the present inquiry, to discuss the subject of the permission of sin, except so far as it has a bearing on the question of self-determination.

SECTION X.

ACTIVITY AND DEPENDENCE.

Meaning of active and passive.

Ambiguity of the terms active and passive—Can any thing be active and passive, at the same time?—*Mental* activity—Can *volition* be passive?—Can an *agent* be, in any sense, passive?—Can any being act, if he is acted upon?

To the supposition, that the will is dependent on any thing without itself, for the nature of its volitions, it is objected, that an accountable agent must be an *active* being; that dependence implies, that he who is the subject of it is *passive;* and that these are *opposite* qualities, each being inconsistent with the other; so that he who is active can not, at the same time, be passive or dependent. These are terms of very convenient ambiguity, with which it is easy to construct a plausible but fallacious argument. The word passive is sometimes used to signify that which is *inactive.* With this meaning, it must, of course,

be the opposite of every thing which is active. To say that that which is in *this* sense passive, is at the same time active, is to assert that that which is active is *not* active. But this is not the *only* signification of the term passive in common use. It is very frequently employed to express the relation of an effect to its cause. In this sense, it is so far from being inconsistent with activity, that activity may be the very effect which is produced. A thing may be *caused* to be *active*. A cannon shot is said to be passive, with respect to the charge of powder which impels it. But is there no activity given to the ball? Is not the whirlwind active, when it tears up the forest? If it is, does this prove that it has no cause; that it has not received its impulse from any thing without itself? But are not cause and effect, you ask, opposite in their nature? They are opposite *relations;* but not always opposite things. The very same thing may be both cause and effect. The mountain wave, which is the effect of the wind, may be the cause which buries the ship in the ocean. The stream of volcanic lava, which is the cause of ruin to fields, and herds, and villages, may be the effect of internal fires and vapors. The same thing is not both cause and effect, *in the same respect.* It is not the cause of its

antecedents, nor the effect of its consequents. It is not passive, in the same sense, in the same *relation*, in which it is active. The axe is passive, with respect to the hand which moves it; but active, with respect to the object which it strikes. The wicket club is passive in *receiving* motion from the hand of the player; it is active in *communicating* motion to the ball.

It may be objected, that these are all examples of *inanimate* objects; and that they have no proper application to *mental* activity. Take then the case of deep and earnest thinking. Is there no activity in this? And is it without a cause? When reading the orations of Demosthenes, or the demonstrations of Newton, are our minds wholly inactive; or if they think intensely, have our thoughts no dependence on the book before us? Is there no activity in the *passions?* Do they always burst forth without a cause? When a patriotic orator rouses his countrymen to deeds of heroism, is there no cause of their impetuous ardor?

But can *volition* be passive? Must it not be altogether active? A volition is undoubtedly an *act*. The mind must, therefore, be *active* in willing; and if the term passive be used to signify simply that which is *inactive*, the will can not, *in this sense*, be

passive, in the same exercise in which it is active. But this truism does not touch the question, whether volition is dependent, for being as it is, on any thing preceding, and whether it is, therefore, *in that sense*, passive. The most active thing in the world may be passive, in the sense of being dependent for its activity on some antecedent. It may be caused to be active. This will be admitted, with respect to inanimate matter, if not with respect to the understanding also. But it is claimed, that the agency of the *will* implies independence; that moral action is opposed not only to inaction, but to its being affected by any external influence. Now if a metaphysician chooses to annex to the terms active, action, and activity, when applied to the will, a meaning entirely different from their signification in all other cases; he has a right to use language in his own way, if he will take the requisite precaution to make his anomalous vocabulary understood. But he has no right to avail himself of this license, to offer to the public deceptive arguments, which derive all their plausibility from an artful interchange of his own, with the common meaning.

It is asserted, that to be *an agent*, is to act independently of external influence. If this is given as a

definition of an agent, it remains still to be shown, that the human mind is *in fact* such an agent. The definition is of no use, unless it correspond with the real nature of the being to whom it is applied. Is it a self-evident truth, that man is such an agent, that neither his natural constitution, nor his acquired propensities, neither his bodily appetites, nor external objects, have any influence in determining the nature of his volitions? Can this be proved by any analogy with the material world? The vapor which gives motion to the steam engine, the fire which devours a dwelling, the wind which sweeps over the ocean, are all very active. Does it follow, that they can not be passive, in the sense of being dependent on something preceding? Does the fact, that all activity in material things *must* have a cause, prove that activity of will *can not* have a cause? Do you say, that the man himself is the cause of his volitions? Very true. But how does this agree with the assertion, that that activity which consists in willing has no relation to a cause? Do you still insist, that the agent himself is active, and not passive? Does this imply that he is uncaused; that he is self-originated? If a created being can be an agent, he can be active in willing, though he is passive in relation to the cause of his being. Do you admit, that he *is* passive, in relation to

the cause of his *existence*; but deny that he is passive, in relation to any cause of his activity? Is there then *no* cause of his activity? Is it a mere matter of accident, that he wills as he does? Is absolute contingence an essential condition of all activity of the will?

It has been said, that a man can not be a free agent, if he is a mere passive recipient of influence from without. This is very true. If he is *merely* passive, he is no agent at all. If he is *merely* passive, he is not active, and therefore does not act. But what absurdity is there in supposing, that he may be active and passive too; active in willing, passive in being caused to will? If a thing is caused to be active, does it follow, that it is *not* active; that it is *merely* passive? If a man is *made* willing to act in a certain way, does this prove, that he is *not* willing? Is it urged, that to suppose a man to be caused to act freely, is inconsistent with the *definition* of free agency? Would it not be more to the purpose, to endeavor to render our definitions conformable to the reality of things; rather than to take it for granted, that facts correspond with our arbitrary definitions? Dr. Reid appears to suppose, that that which is *acted upon* can not act. Would he say, that the water

wheel can not act, when it is acted upon by the stream? I am aware that his observations were probably meant to be applied, not to the action of *matter* upon matter, but to the agency of the *will*. The laws and conditions of these, it is said, are not only different, but contrary. Matter can not act, if it is *not* acted upon; but the will, it is supposed, can not act, if it *is* acted upon. Why not? Because this would be inconsistent with our *definition* of action, when speaking of the will. When a definition is framed, for the express purpose of excluding all dependence of agency of the will upon any thing preceding; it is easy to see, that *such* agency, if such there ever was or can be, in the human mind, is inconsistent with being acted upon. But it ought to be understood, that a definition is not argument. It is of itself no proof. Though it may be the basis of an argument, yet something more is necessary, to justify us in drawing a conclusion. In all cases, except those in which our reasoning is merely *hypothetical*, it is essential to a good definition, that it correspond with *fact*. How, then, does it appear to be *a fact*, that the will can not act, when it is acted upon; that it can not choose, when it is caused to choose, when it is persuaded to choose?

SECTION XI.

FATALISM AND PANTHEISM.

Fatalism.

Different forms of Fatalism—Many of the ancient Fatalists believed the acts of the will *not* to be determined by the Fates—Is there no middle ground, between Fatalism and the doctrine of contingent volition?—Pantheism of Spinoza.

An argument in favor of independent self-determination is drawn, by some, from the consideration that it enables us to keep at a safe distance from the doctrine of *Fatalism.* Cousin says, "The theory of Locke concerning freedom tended to Fatalism."* This calling in the aid of an odious appellation, is a very convenient and summary mode of confuting an opponent. It has a special advantage, when the name which is substituted for argument, is so indefinite and mysterious, that the reader is in no dan-

* Psychology, 277.

ger of discovering its meaning. Fatalism is commonly understood to be something heathenish. But it has assumed such a diversity of forms, the Astrological, the Platonic, the Stoical, the Manichean, and the Mohammedan fatality, that it is sufficiently unintelligible to answer the purpose of an argument which is most efficacious when least understood. It would be a more simple, if not a more satisfactory mode of reasoning, to offer direct proof of the reality of contingent self-determination; instead of taking the circuitous method of first making a selection from eight or ten different kinds of Fatalism, explaining what this is, then proving it to be false, and afterwards supporting the doctrine of self-determination, by shewing in what respects it differs from Fatalism. Whatever was meant by the Fatalism of the ancients, it did *not* imply, that all the changes in the world are under the guidance of *a being of infinite wisdom and infinite goodness*. This was so far from being the case, that the *Gods themselves* were represented, by the doctrine, as being under the control of the Fates. According to the astrological Fatalists, every thing was affected by influence derived from the motions, positions, and aspects of the heavenly bodies. The Stoics and some other sects held to an eternal succession

of causes and effects, analogous to the infinite series of volitions which President Edwards ascribes to the advocates of a self-determining power in the will. It is urged that Fatalists refer every change to a *cause*. So do the believers in self-determination; not excepting even acts of the will. For they hold, that the agent himself is the cause of his own volitions. They believe also in a *succession* of causes, dependent on God. They do not suppose that man has come into being by chance. They admit that he has derived his existence, and powers of willing, from the Creator. But they insist, that the succession of causes does not determine volitions to be in one direction, rather than the contrary. In this also, they agree with many of the ancient Fatalists, who held that the Fates determine other things, but not the free acts of the will.

Is there no way of escaping the odium of Fatalism, but by adopting the fortuitous contingence of Epicurus? Is it Fatalism to believe, that he who formed the soul of man, can so touch the springs of its action, as to influence the will, without interfering with the freedom of its choice? Is a chain of causes, suspended from the throne of nonentity, to be likened to the purposes and agency of the omniscient Creator?

Is it fatalism to believe, that motives may have a real influence in determining volition, and that they may be presented by the providence of God; that the state of the heart has also some concern in giving direction to our acts of choice, and that this native or acquired state is not always the product of chance? Is there no medium between acknowledging the sovereignty of the Fates over the will, and admitting no control, but the dominion of chance? The object of our inquiry is to learn whether moral acts are determined by accident. If they are not, does it certainly follow, that they must be subject to the Fates of the heathen? Is the authority over the heart so divided between fate and contingence, that what is not ascribed to one, must of necessity belong to the other? Is there no room left for any effectual influence, from infinite wisdom and benevolence?

Pantheism.—The suggestion that a denial of contingent self-determination leads to Pantheism, is as indefinite in its application, as the charge of Fatalism. The doctrine of Pantheism, as held by Spinoza and his followers, is that the universe is God; that the material world is the only self-existent substance. What has this to do with the dependence of volition on the state of the heart, and the influence of mo-

tives? Is every action which is even remotely dependent on God to be considered as *his* act? If in him "we live, and move, and have our being," does it follow, that our life is his life, our motion his motion, our existence his existence? Is it Pantheism to believe, that he "worketh in us, both to will and to do?" Does such agency of his imply, that *he only* acts in the case; that there is neither willing nor acting on our part; that there is really but one agent in the universe?

The charge of Fatalism and Pantheism is sometimes met, in the same style of argumentation, and the account is balanced, by raising the cry of *Pelagian* and *Arminian* heresy. But it is quite as important, and in most cases, far more easy, to determine whether a proposed doctrine is *true* or *false*, than to settle the question, whether it is most nearly allied to Fatalism or Arminianism, to Pantheism or Pelagianism.

SECTION XII.

TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.

Philosophical theology.

Difficulty of settling the question before us by philosophical discussion—Appeal to scripture testimony—Upon what principle, are the scriptures to be interpreted?—How far are we to make their meaning conform to our previous opinions?—Does scripture ever contradict reason?—Has God any agency in determining the acts of the will?—He *causes* his people to do his will—He *inclines* their hearts to obey him—His *purposes* extend to the heart—He *changes* the hearts of men—In consequence of his agency, they change their own hearts—The purpose of God in relation to sin—Men harden their own hearts—Permission of sin—Practical importance of the subject of our inquiry—Efficacy of the means of holiness—The doctrine of entire depravity—Influence of the Spirit of God—Conversion of the world—Perpetual holiness of the saints and angels in heaven.

Our inquiry having been conducted thus far, will it now be said, that after all, there is uncertainty and doubt hanging over this subject; that whichever side of the question we take, there are formidable difficul-

ties to be encountered; that although our conclusions may *appear* to be fairly drawn, yet, as we have arrived at them, through a series of logical distinctions, and definitions, and explanations, and such a variety of metaphysical phraseology, there is reason to suspect there may be some latent fallacy in the argument; that we want surer ground on which to rest our opinions, upon a subject of such momentous interest. This is the very result to which I have been aiming to bring the discussion. My object has not been to lay a *philosophical* foundation for religious belief; but to prepare the way for simple and confident reliance on the testimony of scripture. I have not undertaken to prove, by such arguments as must, at once, carry conviction to every mind, that a controlling influence is exercised over the will, in a way which is consistent with accountable agency. It has been my aim to ascertain, whether the *absurdity* of the doctrine has been so *demonstrated*, as to preclude all possibility of finding it asserted in the scriptures. If the subject is one which admits of doubt, let us look for a decision to the oracles of God. He who made the human soul, knows whether its volitions are contingent or not.

But here is presented the question, in *what manner* are we to examine the scriptures, to learn their decision respecting a point in discussion? By what rule are we *to interpret* the language of inspiration? Are we to open the sacred volume, in the spirit of mere learners, prepared to receive implicitly whatever we find to be distinctly impressed on its pages? Or are we to call in the aid of our *previous opinions* on the subject in question, to enable us to make out a correct interpretation? When professing to refer to the authority of scripture, to settle a controverted point, are we to take it for granted, that the meaning of the passages consulted must coincide with the decision which we have already formed in our own minds? What kind of reliance on the testimony of revelation is that which pre-judges the very case on account of which the reference is made?

The scriptures, it must be admitted, are addressed to *rational* beings, to men capable of understanding *moral* truth. Without these faculties, they could not investigate the *evidence* by which the bible is shown to be a revelation from God. Nor would they have the power of *interpreting* correctly the language of the inspired penmen. But does the faculty of comprehending the meaning of the scriptures, imply that

we are capable of discovering, by reason *without* revelation, all the truths which these writings contain? Does a capacity of understanding the language of a witness, in a court of justice, include a previous knowledge of all which that witness can testify? Can every one who comprehends the meaning of the declaration that the dead shall be raised from their graves, demonstrate, by arguments not drawn from revelation, that there will actually be a resurrection?

It is said, and truly said, that the instructions of the scriptures go upon the supposition, that we have, or at least are capable of having, some *previous knowledge* of religious and moral subjects. But does this imply, that *all* which is contained in the word of God, is known to us, before we open its pages? Can he who created the soul of man, and gave him all his power of forming and interpreting language, find no way of making himself understood, when communicating truths not previously discovered? Does the faculty of knowing *something* on the subject of religion, without revelation, imply the power of knowing *every thing*, without its aid. If we can learn something of the visible objects around us, by the faint light of the moon, does it follow that we can

make no additional discoveries by the bright beams of the sun?

It is urged, that the author of revelation is also the author of our natural powers of reasoning; and therefore, that the declarations of scripture can not *contradict* the legitimate conclusions of reason. Are we to infer from this, that in the exercise of our rational faculties, we are never liable to be led into error; that the decisions of human reason, unaided by revelation, are as infallible as the scriptures themselves; that the searching light of inspiration can detect no fallacy in our arguments? But if our powers of reasoning may fail us, in our common investigations; they may lead us, it is said, especially under the influence of a depraved will, to erroneous *interpretations of scripture.* This is undoubtedly true. But does it follow, that revelation throws no additional light upon our path, in our search after truth; that we are quite as liable to be deceived, when ingenuously yielding our understandings to the instructions of scripture, as when relying upon the guidance of natural reason alone? For what purpose, then, have these divine communications been made to us? Why may we not safely lay them aside, and throw ourselves back on the resources of our own powers of

investigation? Why not discontinue our efforts to send the bible to the heathen, who have the pure light of reason for their guide; that reason which was given them by the author of the scriptures?

There can be nothing in the word of God opposed to *intuitive or demonstrative certainty*. But unless human reason is infallible, there may be many things found in the scriptures contrary to our previous *opinions*; opinions formed by evidence which is merely *probable*, and therefore subject to be corrected by the perfect decisions of revelation. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." But we daily give credit to human testimony, though directly contradicting our previous opinions. Was it probable, to the view of natural reason, that the waters of the Red sea, and of the river Jordan, would "stand upright as a heap," that the children of Israel might pass over on dry ground; that Elijah would ascend to heaven in a chariot of fire; that five thousand people could be fully fed upon a few barley loaves? Was it a probable conclusion of reason unaided by revelation, that he by whom "all things were created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth," would be "made flesh, and dwell among us;" that he would labor, and suffer, and die on the cross?

Here is the probable decision of natural reason, contradicted by the certain evidence of inspired truth. If the results obtained by our reason alone, can never be contrary to revelation, because God is the author of both; upon the same principle, the opinions of one man can never be opposed to the opinions of another; for the reasoning powers of all have been given by the same Almighty Parent.

If it be admitted, that the scriptures contain not only truths which may be learned without revelation, but some which are *different* from conclusions obtained by our unassisted reason; the main inquiry returns upon us, in what way are we to come to a knowledge of the latter class? If I open the book of God, with a determination to find nothing there opposed to the opinions which I have previously formed, how am I to discover any truths not known before, though written there, in the most distinct and intelligible characters? How is it possible for me to receive instruction from the scriptures, to correct any errors which I may have adopted? My rule of interpretation would remove, at a stroke, all obstacles which might lie in the way of accommodating the meaning to my own creed.

It is said, that absurd conclusions are often drawn from the scripture, by giving a *literal* construction to passages which are really *figurative*. There is no question of this. But is there no other way of determining whether a passage is to be taken literally or figuratively, than to inquire which interpretation would present a doctrine in accordance with our previous opinions? When it is once decided, that a portion of scripture has a figurative meaning, does this imply, that it has *no meaning at all;* that is, that it may signify one thing or another, as occasion may require? Figurative language, though often ambiguous, may, in many cases, have significations as distinct and certain as literal expressions. When God says to Abraham, "I am thy shield," the meaning is as definite, as if he had said, I am thy protector.

I may have erred, in judging it necessary to devote so large a portion of the present inquiry to an examination of the question, whether the doctrine of contingent self-determination is so demonstrably or intuitively true, that no evidence on the other side is admissible, even if found on the sacred page. I will now proceed to consult the records of inspiration, with the belief, that it is possible they may throw some light on the subject; provided we are willing

to yield our understandings implicitly to the illumination and guidance of the divine testimony.

The point on which we are to examine the evidence furnished by the scriptures, is simply this; whether any thing except a man's own will, has any influence in deciding what his volitions shall be; and especially whether *God* has any agency in determining the character of human volitions. It is not necessary, for our present purpose, to inquire *in what manner* he exercises a controlling influence over our hearts. If he can do this in any way, without interfering with moral agency, he may have various methods of reaching the heart, and giving a direction to the acts of the will. At one time, he may make use of the influence, the example, and the persuasions of our fellow men. At another, he may impress the truths of his word upon the conscience and the heart. He may sometimes operate upon us, by the arrangements of his providence; and sometimes by the special agency of his Spirit. If in any or all of these ways, he gives a direction to our volitions, they are not left to the determination of chance; they are not, in the absolute sense, contingent.

Absolute contingency is incompatible with the influence of any cause. But God is said to *cause* his

people to do his will. "I will put my Spirit within you, and *cause* you to walk in my statutes." "The Lord God will *cause* righteousness and praise to spring forth, before all nations."* Are these declarations consistent with the supposition, that righteousness and obedience are altogether self-determined; that God does not, in the proper sense, *cause* them to spring forth among his people; that at farthest, he does nothing more than render them *probable*, but not certain?

He is said to *incline* their hearts to obey him. "The Lord our God be with us,——that he may *incline* our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways." "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness," says the Psalmist. "Incline not my heart to any evil thing."† How can the heart be inclined in one direction, if the law of moral agency requires, that it be *equally* inclined to either side, to obedience and disobedience?

God is spoken of, as *turning* the hearts of men. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will."

* Ezekiel xxxvi. 27. Isaiah lxi. 11.
† I. Kings viii. 57. 8. Psalm cxix. 36 and cxli. 4.

Turning the heart. Men left to themselves.

Are not other men's hearts as much in the hand of the Lord as those of kings? The Psalmist prays, "Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger towards us to cease." "Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God."* How can the heart be turned by the Lord, if from the very nature of moral agency, it must be left to *turn itself*, independently of any controlling influence from any other being?

It is true, that in many instances, God, in his displeasure, leaves men to *themselves;* to the propensities of their own hearts, under the influence of the objects presented to them, in the common course of his providence. He gives "them over to a reprobate mind." He withholds from them the sanctifying influence of his Spirit. But this, so far from being a *privilege* belonging to them as moral agents, is a dire calamity, a judgment of heaven for their iniquities. "My people would not hearken to my voice," says God, "so I gave them up unto their own hearts'

* Proverbs xxi. 1. Psalm lxxx. 7. lxxxv. 4. Jeremiah xxxi. 18.

lust; and they walked in their own counsels."—"Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone."*

The control which God exercises over the hearts of men, is declared in many other forms of expression. He is said to *make* them obedient or perverse. "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?" Says Paul to the Thessalonians; "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love." "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments," says the Psalmist. "The Lord *direct* your hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ."†

The power of God over the hearts of men, is exercised according to the arrangements and purposes of his infinite wisdom. "Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever his hand and his *counsel* determined before (προώρισε) to be done." "The king hearkened not unto the people, for the cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite, and Jeroboam the son of Nebat." "For God hath

* Psalm lxxxi. 11, 12. Hosea iv. 17.

† Isaiah lxiii. 17. Psalm cxix. 35. II. Thessalonians iii. 5.

put in their hearts to fulfil, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast." "Him being delivered by the *determinate counsel* and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands, have crucified and slain." Joseph says to his brethren; "It was not you that sent me hither, but God."*

The purpose of God to *change* the hearts of men, and turn them from sin to holiness, is declared in distinct predictions. To the people of Israel, he promises thus; "I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries and will bring you into your own land. *A new heart* also *will I give you*, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and *cause* you to walk in my statutes. I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication. Thy people shall be willing, in the day of thy power."†

* Acts iv. 27, 28. I. Kings xii. 15. Revelations xvii. 17. Acts ii. 23. Genesis xlv. 8.

† Ezekiel xxxvi. 24, 26, 27. Jeremiah xxxii. 40. Zechariah xii. 10. Psalm cx. 3.

Whether the term *heart*, in these passages, is to be understood as referring to the substance and faculties of the soul, or a spiritual taste, or the commanding *purpose* of life, or virtuous *affections*; on either supposition, the change must be such as to secure active obedience; for the promise of God is, "I will *cause* you to *walk in my statutes*." "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, *unto obedience*." It is such a change as is connected with *salvation*. "God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."*

The work of God, changing the heart from sin to righteousness, is represented as the exercise of *creative* power. "Create in me a clean heart," says David, "and renew a right spirit within me." "We are his workmanship, *created* unto good works."†

The *continuance* of a religious life, as well as its commencement, is ascribed to the power of God over the heart. "It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. Who are *kept*

* I. Peter i. 2. II. Thessalonians ii. 13.
† Psalm li. 10. Ephesians ii. 10.

by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." Now unto him that is able to *keep you from falling*, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."*

To avoid the result to which the passages now adduced appear so conclusively to lead, it may be said, that there is another class of texts, of a very different, if not opposite meaning. If in one place, *God* is spoken of, as inclining the hearts of men to keep his law; in others, they are commanded to incline *their own* hearts to the Lord. If the Psalmist prays, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies;" he declares, in the same psalm, "*I* have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway." If God is spoken of, as *turning* the hearts of men; they are repeatedly commanded to *turn themselves* from their evil ways. If he is said to *give* them a new heart, and to *make* them go in the path of his commandments; they are required to *make themselves* a new heart and a new spirit. If he is said to be able to *keep his saints from falling;* they are exhorted, by the same apostle, to *keep themselves* in the love of God.

* Philippians ii. 13. I. Peter i. 5. Jude xxiv. 25.

Now, in what way, are we to determine the meaning of these two classes of texts? Are we to consider them as directly contradictory? Are we at liberty to make our choice between them; to adopt the one class as true, and to reject the other as false; or so explain them away, as to leave to them no determinate signification? If men incline their own hearts to obedience, must we conclude that God does *not* incline them? If they are required to make themselves a new heart, does it follow that he does *not* give them a new heart? If they turn from sin to righteousness, is it certain, that he does not *cause* them to turn; that he does not *make* them to go in the path of his commands; that their obedience is independent of his agency and influence?

Are we not bound, on the contrary, to put such a construction upon the two classes of texts, that *both* may be admitted as true? How is this to be done? Evidently, by considering the agency of men, of which the passages speak, as being the *consequence* of the the agency of God. If he *causes* them to walk in his commands, they do actually thus walk. If he *makes* them obedient, they really obey. If he *turns* their hearts to himself, they themselves turn to the Lord. If he gives them a new heart and a right spirit, they

exercise the affections of a new and obedient heart. Not that the agency of God in renewing the heart, is identified with the agency of men; but the one is the *consequence* of the other, is *dependent* on the other. *His* turning them is not *their* turning. Their obedience is not his obedience. His giving them repentance is not their repentance. But without his agency, they would not repent. His giving them a new heart, is not the same as their making themselves a new heart; but it is *causing* them to make themselves a new heart. His working in them, to will and to do, is not their working; but it is *rendering* them willing to work out their own salvation.

The divine purposes are not confined to the commencement and continuance of *holiness*. They have a relation to the commission of *iniquity*. God is repeatedly spoken of, in the scriptures, as hardening the hearts of men. Of the Canaanites who were exterminated by Joshua, it is said, "It was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly." Of Sihon, king of Heshbon, it is said, "The Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand." Isaiah cries unto God and says, "O Lord, why hast

thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?"* God repeatedly declared to Moses, that he would harden the heart of Pharaoh, and the hearts of the Egyptians. "And the Lord said unto Moses, when thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thy hand. But I will harden his heart, that he will not let the people go."†

It appears that he had a *purpose* to accomplish, in relation to the hardening of the king's heart. "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders, in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth my armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt, by great judgments." "For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, they are entangled in the land; the wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them, and I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." "And the children of Israel shall go on dry

* Joshua xi. 20. Deuteronomy ii. 30. Isaiah lxiii. 17.
† Exodus iv. 21.

ground, through the midst of the sea: And I, behold I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them; and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host."* When the fulfilment of these predictions was seen, in the events which followed, "The Lord said unto Moses, go in unto Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him."†

The inference which the apostle draws, from the history of Jacob and Esau, and of Pharaoh, is, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."‡ If these several passages are allowed to have any meaning at all, they can signify nothing short of this, that God so ordered the course of his providence, that the hardening of the hearts of Pharaoh and of the Egyptians, and of the Canaanites, was the certain consequence. In answer to these numerous and explicit declarations, will it be urged that, in other passages, it is frequently affirmed, that Pharaoh hardened *his own* heart? Does it follow, of course, that the several texts quoted

* Exodus vii. 3, 4, and chap xiv. 3, 4, 16, 17.
† Exodus x. 1. ‡ Romans ix. 18.

above *are not true;* that there is no sense, in which God has ever hardened the hearts of men?

Will it be said, that God merely *permitted* their hearts to be hardened; or permitted them to harden their own hearts. If this be conceded, it must still be understood, that he had power to *prevent* this result. What sort of permission is a mere inability to prevent that which is permitted? When it is said, that it was of the Lord to harden the hearts of the Canaanites, that he might destroy them utterly; and of Sihon, that the Lord God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into the hand of the Israelites; and of Pharaoh, that the Lord hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that he might shew his signs before him; is nothing more intended by all this, than that God had no power over the hearts of these men; that he permitted them to be hardened, because he was unable to prevent it?

Do you say, that he left them to be hardened, under the course of his *providence?* Then the course of his providence, his *own* providential dispensations, had an *influence* on them. Is the declaration of the apostle, that "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," consistent

with the supposition, that God has no power to prevent the hardening of the heart? Is there no *distinguishing* interposition, in the case of those who are "vessels of mercy?" Do all these distinct declarations of scripture, respecting God's hardening the hearts of men, mean nothing more than that they *happen* to become hardened, under the influence to which they are exposed?

After attentively examining the various passages of scripture which speak of the purposes and agency of God, in relation to the hearts and actions of men; declaring that he *causes* righteousness to spring forth; that he *inclines* the hearts of his people to obey him; that he *turns* them at his pleasure; that he *makes* them obedient or perverse; that he *directs* their hearts into the love of God; that *his counsel* determines before, the things to be done by human agency; that he *gives a new heart* and a right spirit; that he *works* in his people *to will and to do;* that he is able to *keep* them from falling, till he presents them faultless, before the presence of his glory; and that, on the other hand he often *hardens* the heart and makes it obstinate: after weighing well the import of these several expressions, can any one fail to admit, that according to the scriptures, God has a determining

influence over human volitions; can he escape from this conclusion, on any other ground, than that he has come to the examination, with a preconceived and settled opinion, that such a doctrine *can not* be true, and therefore, can not be found in the oracles of God? Are we thus to explain away the explicit declarations of scripture, till we have brought them to coincide with our own philosophy? Can the advocates of a directing and determining divine influence, express their opinions in stronger or more definite terms, than those used by the inspired writers?

It is not necessary to contend, that a determining influence implies, in all cases, a *positive* and *immediate* agency of God upon the heart. If in his unsearchable wisdom, he chooses, in many instances, to leave the human will to itself, and to the motives presented to it, in the ordinary course of events; while, as often as he sees fit, he interposes by special providences, and by the operations of his Spirit, to give a new direction to its acts; it is then truly under his control. "The rivers of water are in the hand of the Lord," because he either allows them to flow in their accustomed channels, or "turneth them whithersoever he will." So the human heart is in his hand, if he can either directly or indirectly, control its exercises,

whenever he pleases. But if, from the very nature of moral agents, all their volitions must be contingent, in the absolute sense; they can be subject to no directing influence, from any quarter whatever. They must be left wholly to the determination of chance.

The question, whether human volitions are contingent, is nothing less than this, whether God can, in any way, by the measures of his providence, by the precepts and sanctions of his law, by the mercy of the gospel, by the terrors of perdition, by the glories of heaven, or by the operations of his Spirit, have any influence over the voluntary acts of his creatures. It is, in short, a question, *whether God or chance is on the throne of the moral universe.* That the Creator of all things can control the *material* world, no one ventures to deny. But the theories of many seem to suppose, that he can not touch the springs of moral action, without deranging the essential laws of accountable agency. Yet the government exercised over all created minds, is as much more important, than the regulation of the material universe, as the worlds of intelligent creatures, exceed in value the worlds of matter which they inhabit.

This is not a subject of barren speculation. It is intimately connected with some of the most important doctrines and duties of evangelical religion. Not only does the efficacy of *divine* influence on the hearts of men imply, that something from without the will is concerned in determining its volitions; but the success of all *human* efforts for the prevention of iniquity, and the promotion of holiness, must depend on their tendency, in connection with other influences, to give direction to acts of the will. If volitions are, in the absolute sense, contingent; if they are so self-determined, as to be entirely independent of every thing from without, for being as they are; how unavailing must be all our endeavors to induce others to turn from the practice of iniquity. To what purpose are religious instruction, and admonition, and exhortation, and intreaty, if they have no influence upon the feelings and purposes of the persons addressed? How can a preacher enter the desk, with any hope of success, if he believes, that the hearts of his hearers are controlled by the law of contingence? Why should a parent attempt to guard his child against the allurements of vice, if temptation has no power to influence the will; if warning has no efficacy in restraining from iniquity? We ought not, indeed, to rely on

any human means as being, of themselves, sufficient to produce holiness, without the accompanying agency of the Divine Spirit. But absolute contingence is as inconsistent with any efficacious operation of the Spirit of God, as with a determining influence from the efforts of men.

The belief that human volitions are not rendered sinful or holy by blind contingence, is in accordance with the scriptural representation of the *entire depravity* of man in his unrenewed state. It implies that there are causes and influences in operation, which give a *uniform* character of sinfulness to his acts of will. But there is no uniformity in the results of contingence. Permanent depravity is inconsistent with the supposition that, with respect to each separate volition, there is an even chance whether it will be sinful or holy.

Contingent determination of the will is inconsistent with the scriptural account of the *change* which is wrought, in the heart of man, by the *Spirit of God.* Here is an influence *from without.* If it has any efficacy, in determining the acts of the will to be holy, there is something besides contingence, something besides the man himself, which is concerned in deciding what his volitions shall be. When the Spirit of God,

in his sanctifying influence, descends on the churches, is it a matter of chance whether any are brought to repentance? Is the glory of the marvellous change which is witnessed, to be ascribed exclusively to the self-determining power of the converts? Is this moral renovation accounted for, by saying that the subjects of it *happen* to decide as they do?

On the ground that the means of salvation, when accompanied with the renewing influence of the Spirit, have a real efficacy, in turning the hearts of men from sin to holiness, we rest our confident expectation of the final triumph of grace on the earth, *in the conversion of the world to God.* It is a reliance on his power to subdue the depraved will of man, which has united the hearts of Christians, in prayer and zeal for the salvation of the heathen; which supports the missionary, in his perilous labors among those who are perishing in their superstitions and iniquities; which assures us of the fulfilment of the divine predictions, that "all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord."

But if the decisions of the will are independent of all influence from without, what ground of hope can there be, that the heathen world will yield their hearts to the calls of the gospel. If even the Spirit

of God can interpose no determining agency, to stay the desolating tide of depravity, without violating the laws of accountable volition, how can we expect an answer to our *prayers* for the conversion of the world? If all the acts of the will are contingent; if they are equally liable to be holy and to be sinful; how can we hope for a *millennial age* of universal and exalted piety?

On this supposition, what security is there, that disaffection and revolt may not, at any moment, break out, among the hosts of the redeemed in heaven? Are they safe by being *confirmed* in perpetual obedience? How is it possible they should be thus confirmed, if their wills are so balanced, by the freedom to either side, that at every instant, there is an even chance in favor of and against their fidelity? It may be said, that God has *promised* to secure them in constant and endless obedience. He has promised, then, to preserve them in that state in which their wills are *not* evenly balanced between holiness and sin. If their sad experience of the consequences of transgression on the earth, if their blissful participation in the glories of heaven, if their gratitude for the mercy which has brought them safe to the paradise above, if their view of the terror and despair to which

the impenitent are doomed; if these and other motives, powerfully impressed on their minds by divine influence, are sufficient to keep them from falling; then are they sufficient to prevent that equal tendency of the will to opposite directions, which seems to be thought by some to be essential to responsible agency. Must we then be driven to the conclusion, that as soon as the redeemed are made perfect in heaven, they cease to be moral agents; that they no longer possess that freedom to either side which is necessary to render them deserving of praise or blame? Confirmation in uniform and never ending rectitude, is inconsistent with contingent determination. If every volition is fortuitous, and if the countless myriads in the heavenly world, are to put forth acts of will continually, through the ages of their future existence; it is absurd to suppose that *all* these acts will *chance* to be on the side of holy obedience.